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THE BOLSTER BOOK :

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REGINALD DRAKE BIFFIN)

BY

HARRY GRAHAM

AUTHOR OF

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A GROUP OF SCOTTISH WOMEN

PREFACE

TO the great reading public of these islands the name of Reginald Drake Biffin conveys little more than that of any other successful man of letters. They only know him as the prolific author of that remarkable series of popular novels—"The Gay World," "Strangers and Sojourners," "Roses All The Way," "The Squire Invisible," etc.—in which his life-like portraits of London society have earned so well-merited a meed of praise, especially in the Colonies. To the literary elect Biffin is perhaps better appreciated as the writer of those delightful volumes of essays, "Broken Arcs" and "Froth and Filigree," which set forth in language of unexampled charm and purity all those opinions upon life which the average reader has long entertained but is naturally ashamed to express. In his journalistic capacity Biffin has probably acquired his greatest fame by those patriotic ballads in which, but a year ago, he strove to rouse Britons to some sense of the physical and spiritual degradation to which the nation was slowly sinking. The fact that a foreign pastrycook had run twenty miles faster than any free-born Briton was in itself

a sufficient proof—if proof were necessary—of the degeneracy of our island race. Biffin's trumpet call was uttered none too soon. In the home of every true Imperialist his verses on this subject have become household words, notably perhaps that stirring poem which begins :—

“ Lapped in luxury, lovers of leisure,
Sunk in a self-complacent sleep,
Bent upon peace, pursuers of pleasure,
Comfort's cup ye have drained too deep !
Soon shall the shadowy night be past,
Soon shall the dawn more brightly break,
When in the light of day, at last,
Ye awake !
Hearing the voices that fill the air,
Voices that whisper “ Beware ! Beware ! ”
[Chorus.]

Boys of the Bull-dog Breed, advance !
Sons of the Foam, stand forth !
Sharpen the sword and couch the lance !
East and West and South and North !
Up ! Up ! Up ! etc. etc.

This striking song has been quoted again and again in the leading articles of our more responsible halfpenny papers, as well as upon the political platforms of most Conservative statesmen ; it has been sung and recited upon many a music-hall stage. There can surely be no exaggeration in

saying that it will endure as long as the language in which it is written.

For close upon thirty years it has been my pleasure and privilege to be one of Reginald Biffin's most intimate friends. I knew him as a young man at Oxford, when I prophesied that he would go far—this was long before he went to Australia at the expense of his relations—and his recent untimely retirement from the field of letters I mourn not only as a national but as a personal loss. The task, therefore, of editing this collection of his lighter papers has been for me a labour of love.

The essays that form the greater part of this volume need no editorial recommendation: they can speak for themselves. But on the subject of the Diary which brings this book to a close I would like to say a few words. Written for the most part in pencil, between the hours of five and seven o'clock in the evening, when Biffin's daily literary task was ended, these pages show no signs of haste, no lack of that felicitous style of which my friend was so pardonably proud. This monthly journal, kept with such meticulous care for almost an entire year, compares favourably with the more laboured and responsible work of any of our leading latter-day essayists. Nothing like it, I venture to affirm, is to be found in the writings of Mrs Earle, Sir Herbert Maxwell, or Messrs A. C. and E. F. Benson.

And I feel convinced that the publication of this diary will but tend to enhance the reputation of a writer whose retirement we all lament, who could at times (as we shall see) sink the author in the dilettante, who was not only a man of letters, but above all else (in the proper sense of the phrase) a man of the world.

It is possible—nay probable—that to some readers the literary charm of this volume will make little or no appeal. To such (if such there be) I beg to recommend the ensuing pages upon more material grounds. In these days of almost universal insomnia any attempt to mitigate the sorrows of the sleepless cannot fail to deserve, if it does not obtain, the warmest possible welcome. No apology therefore is necessary for the publication of a volume primarily designed to minister to the needs of all who are strangers to the arms of Morpheus. In the compilation of this Book for the Bedside, as I have ventured to call it, one single object has been resolutely kept in view. Every chapter has been chosen solely on its merits as an aid to slumber; every page, by reason of its irrelevance and discursiveness, is a natural soporific; every paragraph is calculated to induce sleep. In the case of the "Diary of a Dilettante" this is particularly true. No sooner has the reader's attention become absorbed by any one subject than that subject is purposely dropped, and another,

wholly irrelevant, takes its place. Thus, after a time, the human interest wearies, the book falls from the nerveless hand, and the Reader sinks into a profound and merciful coma from which he is with difficulty aroused in time for breakfast. To all who toss feverishly upon wakeful couches, vainly wooing slumber throughout the interminable hours that precede the dawn, these soothing essays—"sleeping-drafts," one might almost call them—should bring the solace they desire. As an aid to sleep, as a companion for the bedside, this volume has few equals and no superior. It comes as a boon and a blessing to all for whom night supplies no respite from the anxieties of the day. No bedroom can be complete without "The Bolster Book"; it should find a place beneath every pillow.

H. G.

NOTE

Many of these papers have appeared in *Vanity Fair* and *The Tatler*, and are republished by kind permission.

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I
STRAIGHT TALKS TO THE
YOUNG

"Seek not thine agéd grand-dam to instruct,
With impious lips, defying Nature's law,
Forth from its snowy shell, by secret duct,
The golden juices of the egg to draw."

Old Adage.

No. 1—ON ORDERING DINNER

"AFTER a good dinner one can forgive anybody, even one's own relations," said a well-known wit. But the difficulty of securing a really good dinner is one that at times seems insurmountable to the average young man. To ensure the enjoyment of a banquet at which the most censorious gourmet can scarcely cavil, only three things are really necessary—a first-class restaurant, a knowledge of life, and a slight balance at the bank.

There are, fortunately, a large number of excellent restaurants in London. There is one particularly good one on the right-hand side, and another (a trifle more expensive, perhaps, but oh, so fashionable!) a little way up the street on the left, half a dozen yards past the post-office; while there are three or four charming little eating-houses round the corner, next door to the police-station and just before you come to the boot-shop. (You have only to mention my name to the head-waiter at any of these places to be treated with an old-world courtesy which is in itself sufficient to promote a healthy appetite, and to find yourself being triumph-

may fearlessly invite the dear vicar's wife or poor cousin Henrietta (who married the dentist and has been looking "down in the mouth" ever since), to repair to a restaurant. There we order a light half-crown dinner, of which our guests may partake with such suitable expressions of gratitude as the lavishness of our hospitality naturally evokes.

Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that I have come up from Sydenham, with my evening shoes in a brown paper parcel, to spend a rollicking night in town. I am sitting at a table in the corner of an over-gilded, over-heated restaurant, surrounded by my two guests (who have, of course, removed their goloshes and "fascinators" in the annexe). The head-waiter approaches with a profound bow, and requests me to issue my commands. How can I best set about the delicate business of ordering a meal that shall be adequate and at the same time inexpensive?

The waiter suggests a dozen oysters to start off with. A hurried glance at the bill of fare shows me that "natives" are 4s. 6d. a dozen. "No oysters, thanks." As I remark to the vicar's wife, oysters are never really safe at this time of the year. (What I mean to say is that they are never really *cheap* at any time of the year.)

"*Hors d'œuvres?*" Well, yes. A sardine is a cool and pleasant animal, looks well on a plate, and is perfectly harmless when it has not been

leaning up too long against the sides of the tin. It is not an easy fish to eat, though. Some people treat a sardine as if it were potted-meat, and butter their bread with its backbone ; others eat it with a knife and fork, as though it were a turbot. No ; on second thoughts, no *hors d'œuvres*.

"Soup ?" Oh, yes, decidedly. Thick or clear ? "Clear," says Henrietta, rather archly. I should have preferred thick myself, but no matter. I know that clear soup so well. It is called *croûte au pot* and is nothing but beef-tea with a few carrots and a large crust of bread dropped into it. (Personally, if I want bread in my soup, I can put it there myself. But never mind.)

"Fish ?" Yes. "Sole or whitebait ?" "Are the whitebait good and small ?" I enquire. (I have asked this question for years, and the answer has invariably been the same.) The whitebait are good and small. Very well, then, we'll have sole.

"Do you wish for an *entrée* ?" asks the waiter. No, I think not. The curtain at His Majesty's rises at 8.15, and I haven't come up all the way from Sydenham to miss any of the scenic effects.

Now, let me see, shall we have "tournedos of beef" or "noisettes of mutton ?" (Heavens ! how tired I am of those eternal tournedos and noisesettes !) The vicar's helpmeet votes loudly for mutton. Mutton it shall be.

Here the waiter becomes very suave. "What

do you say to a nice bird?" he asks, pensively. There, I admit, he has me. I have nothing on earth to say to a nice bird. Poor Dan Leno would no doubt have said "Good morning, nice bird," or something suitable of the kind, but I am never quite at home in the society of dumb animals. Henrietta comes to the rescue, however, and declares that she simply adores snails and quipe—she means quails and snipe. "Let us have a quail, then," say I. (Snipe are quoted at 5s. each, quails only 3s. 4d.) "One gets so tired of snipe." (By "one" I mean people who eat snipe; I don't myself.) We'll finish the meal with a tri-color ice that tastes like the most delicious hair-oil, and a cup of Turkish coffee that doesn't taste like anything on earth.

One moment; there is the wine to order. I was nearly forgetting it. This, however, is an easy matter. Ginger-beer for the vicar's spouse, a pint of light Chianti in a neat little basket for Henrietta, and for me some of that peculiar beverage which is always served in an obviously new bottle with a still newer cork, with no maker's name on the label, on which is simply inscribed the suggestive title:—"Ye Olde Whisky."

Ho, waiter! bring in the sardines, and let the revels commence!

No. 2—ON TABLE TALK

IT is Montaigne, I think, who declares that silence and modesty are the two most valuable qualities in the art of conversation. But however much I may agree with the great French philosopher, I cannot help thinking that the art of carrying on agreeable conversation requires something more than even the modesty of a Hall Caine or the silence of a Dean Maitland. Silence—to repeat myself—is often the wit of fools as well as a virtue of the wise; but, like other virtues, it can easily be carried to excess. And the man who merely shakes his head in a knowing way, or at frequent intervals says “Ha!” with a wealth of dark suggestion, may be a witty fool or a virtuous sage, but adds little to the gaiety of social intercourse.

Even at the best regulated dinner-parties, silences will at times occur, when the hostess remarks nervously that the clock is pointing to twenty minutes past eight, or the elder Miss Blossom murmurs archly that an angel must be passing through the room. This is the moment when a young man with courage and character can leap

into the breach and save the situation by some apposite and felicitous remark.

It is not always easy to think of something bright and original to say on these occasions, but a man who has studied his morning paper with any intelligence can generally recall some item of the day's news with which to set the ball of conversation rolling. Turning to his hostess with a cheerful smile, "I suppose we shall all be flying soon," he will say, or "How very sad it is about those 70,000 Chinamen who perished in a cyclone last Tuesday," or "I see that they are going to abolish the House of Lords," or "They tell me that the constable who was so badly bitten in the ankle by a Suffragette is bound to lose his leg, poor fellow."

It is always as well, however, before embarking upon any general or abstract topic, to be sure of one's audience, and thus avoid offending the weaker brethren by some indiscreet allusion to a painful subject. For instance, nothing is more annoying than to ask a clean-shaven distinguished-looking man on the other side of the table (whom you take to be a flourishing lawyer) whether he approves of the Disestablishment of the Church, and then to find out that he is a Suffragan Bishop. Errors of this kind can always be obviated by the simple means of dropping a spoon at the beginning of dinner and retiring under the table to retrieve it. During your sojourn beneath the festive board

you can easily find time to glance round and note if any of your fellow-guests are wearing gaiters. If so, avoid all allusions to theological matters. The minor clergy may sometimes puzzle you, as they do not sport gaiters. As a rule, however, you will find that a Prebendary wears elastic-sided boots, while a humble Curate is shod in laced shoes. (The former, by the by, is the senior of the two, a fact which can easily be remembered if you bear in mind the old proverb which declares that Prebension is better than Cure.)

I remember, one Sunday night some years ago, sitting next to a man whom I imagined for some reason or other to be the eldest son of a peer. Conversation had reached a low ebb when I was inspired to ask him whether he had happened to see that extremely indifferent play, *The Wooing of Colonel Wotherspoon*, which was then running at the Royalty. "Yes," he replied, "I have seen it every night since it was produced. But then, you see, I play Colonel Wotherspoon!"

My difficulty was this: if I thereupon declared that I myself had never seen it, the conversation would at once cease, and the actor would think me a fatuous idiot. If, on the other hand, I admitted having seen the play, and thereby showed that my neighbour's rendering of the chief part had failed to make the smallest impression on my memory, he would merely write me down an ass. As it was

I simply fumbled about, looking for a suitably evasive reply, until the *jeune dernier* of the Royalty must have thought me both an idiot and an ass.

In this country, where nobody takes the trouble to introduce guests to one another, a young man may often be confronted with another problem when he sits down to dinner in a strange house. After he has conversed for some time with the lady whom he had the privilege of escorting to the dining-room, he (and probably she too) may require a change. His partner turns away with a sigh of relief to the Indian colonel on her right, and the young man looks helplessly round at the lady on his other side, to whom he has not been introduced, and wonders how he shall commence a conversation. At one time it was customary for the man to assume a more than usually vacant expression and say, "Is this my bread or yours?" at the same time transfixing the lady's hand (if it happened to be resting on the table) with an ordinary fish-fork. When order has been once more restored, he could enquire tenderly after the punctured limb, administer sympathy, apologies, beef-tea, and jelly, and build up a life-long friendship on the slender foundations of a slight knowledge of the rudiments of "first aid to the injured." This custom has, however, fallen into desuetude.

One very good way of starting a conversation with a lady whom you do not know at all, is to ask her

whether by any chance she is fond of string. If she merely looks frightened and says that she does not quite understand, you may as well give up the job altogether. If, on the other hand, she replies, "Oh, Mr Baffingfold (or whatever your name happens to be), I simply *adore* string; and pink tape is a thing I positively *worship*!" then you may be sure of getting on swimmingly. By the end of dinner you will be talking confidentially on such subjects as the Immortality of the Soul or the Malice of Inanimate Things, and all will be well.

Fate often comes to the assistance of the bashful youth who is groping laboriously in his brain for a fruitful topic of conversation. A well-known publisher who happens to be a friend of mine—this sounds an unlikely story, but is perfectly true—was once seated at dinner next to a charming girl whom he had never before met. Her beauty held him spell-bound during the soup, but the advent of whitebait lent him courage, and by way of breaking the ice he took up a dish of macaroons which was reposing on the table in front of him and offered it to his partner. "Oh, thanks," she exclaimed, "I think I'll have that little chocolate biscuit at the edge of the plate." "Excuse me," was the publisher's reply, "but that is not a chocolate biscuit. That's my thumb."

It must always be remembered that a dinner conversation is not the same thing as a conversation

in a conservatory or in a punt. Young people are far too apt to forget this. I know few things that sound so bad as to hear, during one of those sudden temporary lulls which punctuate the general babel of a dinner party, a voice saying, "Miss Hammer-smith—may I call you Gertrude?—I love you with a passion that mocks the power of words!" That sort of thing is in execrable taste; it can be done just as well and far more effectively in the cab on the way home. (If the cab windows are not fitted with blinds the requisite privacy can always be obtained by breathing heavily on the glass.)

I have a friend called Whiting who is (to put it as delicately as possible) of a distinctly amorous disposition. I happened to be sitting opposite to him the other night at a dinner given by the Buff-Orpingtons in Elm Park Gardens, when he was placed between Mrs Ogle and the second Miss Pickford, both of whom are nearly as susceptible as he.

When the entrée was being handed round I heard my friend say to Mrs Ogle, "Charlotte, you interest me strangely. Tell me more." At the same time he gently pressed her left hand under the table. Mrs Ogle returned his grip, and held on firmly all through the next course. Poor Whiting was thus reduced to eating a *salmi de perdreau* with his fork.

A few moments later Miss Pickford turned to him with an appealing glance and said, "I am so un-

happy to-night, Clarence. I feel as if something terrible were going to happen to me." Before he knew what he was doing, Whiting had instinctively grasped her right hand with his left, more out of sympathy than anything else.

We had now reached the asparagus stage of the meal, and both Mrs Ogle and Miss Pickford were eating that succulent vegetable with one hand, while with the other they each held one of Mr Whiting's. He, poor man, had to refuse the asparagus, though he is devoted to it, and would have starved for the rest of dinner had he not at length managed to transfer both the ladies' hands (unknown to either of them) to one of his. He was thus able to finish the meal with a spoon.

The moral of this is sufficiently obvious.

No. 3—ON HOW TO RUN A MOTOR CAR

SOME men, as Shakespeare says, are born to motors ; others have motors thrust up against them. I happen to belong to the latter class, but, though I am not the actual owner of a car, I have so often been a passenger on the motors of my friends that I feel as competent to give advice upon this subject as I do upon any other. I can speak from experience, even if that experience be of a purely vicarious kind, because in the social circle in which I move—though it is really more of a square than a circle, and less of a square than a mews—motor “shop” is talked from morning till night by expert amateur chaffeurs who are in the habit of taking their lives (and other people’s too, for the matter of that,) in their hands daily.

I am not absolutely ignorant as to the rudiments of motoring. I know the difference between a sparking-plug and a carburetter, and I have spent many a happy hour on some bleak expanse of wild upland road pumping out the petrol tank and whispering sweet nothings into the tyre. I do not, as I said before, drive a car myself, but I

often sit next the driver and encourage him by giving vent every now and then to felicitous exclamations, such as "Whew! That was a close shave! Did you see the expression on that old lady's face?" or, "Is it a chicken that I observe on the off-side lamp?" or, "One moment, while I disentangle that dachshund from the gearcase." I speak, as I say, from experience, as one having authority, but unbiassed, unprejudiced by any real knowledge of my subject.

The first thing necessary for the full enjoyment of motoring is the possession of a reliable chauffeur. It is usual to employ a foreigner to play the part, though the same result can be attained by the simpler process of disguising your second-coachman in a yachting cap three sizes too large for him, cutting his hair *en brosse*, confining him in the mushroom-shed until he has grown a moustache, and bribing him to change his name from Alfred Berridge to Alphonse Bonnefemme.

The next important item is, of course, a motor-car, in the choice of which you cannot exercise too much discretion or too sound a judgment. There are many ways of acquiring a car. The easiest method is to watch the newspapers closely for accounts of motor accidents, and immediately write or wire to the victims, their executors or next of kin, and make a suitable offer for the car. In this way you can generally manage to acquire a cheap machine.

It is well, however, to be wary on this as on all matters that concern motors. An uncle of mine happened to read a newspaper report of the dramatic and premature demise of an American millionaire who had been touring the Alps in his 70 h.p. Jarrol-Stinkenhaus. He at once sent a picture-postcard to the widow, offering £200 down for the motor, a sum which was immediately accepted. It was not until the final negotiations for a sale had been satisfactorily concluded and my uncle had sent his cheque, that he discovered that the car in question had fallen down a crevasse in an Alpine glacier. There was consequently no chance of his getting it until the year 2475 A.D., by which time the leading scientists of Switzerland calculated that the particular Alp in which this car was embedded would disgorge its prey into the valley below. Being a busy man, my uncle could not afford to wait.

Another plan frequently adopted by persons who desire to possess a motor is to approach a friend who has recently bought one, and ask him how much he will pay to have it taken off his hands. A man who has just purchased a car is always ready to dispose of it, either because he finds that it is not all his fancy painted, or else because he wants to buy a still larger one. Yet a third way consists in going to a shop where motors are sold, and ordering one to be delivered at your back door with the milk in the morning. You then go home and

wait for two years, by which time the pattern of your purchase is so hopelessly out of date that you are willing to sell it for a mere song to some less experienced friend.

For argument's sake, however, we will assume that you have got a motor and a chauffeur and a licence and a pair of goggles and a coon coat. (And, by the by, it is not necessary to buy a Pomeranian dog to go with your car. You can have a couple of small spaniels, if you like, to draw over your knees when you are feeling cold, but it is wrong to have a Dalmatian hound to run alongside. It's not done.)

Your car, then, is at the front door. You are standing ready, disguised to resemble what someone has happily described as a polar bear who suddenly finds himself elected a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron. All you want now is a slight knowledge of the art of driving a motor. This I am fortunately in a position to give you. Step briskly forward in front of the car, seize the handle that you will notice hanging there, and turn it sharply round from left to right. Then let go, and it will swing back and catch you a smart blow on the side of the head. Repeat the operation until the engine is started. You must, however, be careful to see that the brakes are on before you set the machinery going. Otherwise, of course, the car will start while you are winding it up, and you will be borne

firmly but rapidly along into the window of the nearest greengrocer's shop, where a crate full of ripe bananas will impinge upon your solar plexus, possibly with fatal results.

When the engine is fairly started, run round and spring lightly into the car, pull back (or forwards, I forget which,) the handle you will see on the right-hand side, grasp the steering wheel with one hand and the syphon—I mean siren—with the other, and call loudly for help. The rest must be left to Providence.

As you drive along the street it is as well to pinch the india-rubber ball at your elbow occasionally, and thus utter minatory sounds (as of a dyspeptic goat who has but recently been deprived of her young) which will assist in clearing a passage for you through the traffic. Now and then, too, you should lean forward and toy with the little brass-stoppered bottles of oil in front of you. These lubricate the machinery. If you do not pump them sufficiently hard, your car will probably catch fire and you will ascend to the sky in smoke, like Elijah; if, on the other hand, you pump too violently, your exhaust-pipe will emit such mephitic exhalations that you will be arrested by the police.

At your feet you will notice two pedals. If you are a pianist your toes will unconsciously stray towards them from time to time. This tendency must be checked. At first, at any rate, you will

be able to put quite enough expression into your driving without the use of the pedals. But in case you should ever feel impelled to use them, let me explain to you that one is the brake and the other the accelerator. I wish I could tell you which is which, that being really rather an important matter, but for the moment I cannot remember. You can easily find this out for yourself, however, as you go along. Proceed at a leisurely pace down Bond Street, until you get close behind a family barouche containing a dowager countess in her own right. Then make a hurried mental choice, and place your foot firmly on whichever of the two pedals you consider most suitable. If it be the brake, you will at once stop ; if it be the accelerator, you will go right on through the family barouche, taking the dowager countess in her own right with you. This is very unpleasant, especially if you do not happen to have been introduced to the noble lady in question. Many a young man has forfeited his right to a ticket of admission to the Royal Enclosure at Brooklands for a less heinous crime than this.

One last word of friendly counsel.—On second thoughts, I will reserve it for the next chapter.

No. 4—ON MANNERS FOR MOTORISTS

SO much advice has been heaped upon the unwilling heads of chauffeurs and the owners of motor-cars that to burden those unhappy beings with any further supply of good counsel would be a work of supererogation.

There is, however, a type of motorist who requires all the advice that anyone can spare ; I mean, of course, the passenger. Many a man thinks that when he has taken his seat beside a millionaire friend who is driving his own Poopenhauss car, and has buckled his goggles over his ears, his duties and responsibilities are at an end ; that he is at liberty to behave as though he were, so to speak, in his own dog-cart. An idea of this kind is fallacious—nay, it is criminal. A passenger who has no regard for the etiquette of motoring is as much to blame as a man who so far forgets the niceties of private life as to attend a subscription ball in a black tie and white socks, who swallows his grape-skins, or does any of those indecorous acts which stamp the parvenu and the upstart.

It will be simpler, perhaps, if I explain my meaning by giving this misguided creature a few

instances of the kind of conduct which he must particularly avoid.

The well-known rule about "not speaking to the man at the wheel" holds good on the high road as well as on the high seas. I do not mean that one should not occasionally address a word of intelligent sympathy to the individual who is driving the car ; but it is wrong to ply him with a ceaseless flow of reminiscent babble. It is, in fact, extremely dangerous to choose a moment when he is turning a sharp corner to point out certain beauties of the surrounding landscape which might otherwise possibly escape his notice. The desire to secure his appreciation of a simple wayside flower may be as fraught with peril as the passion of the Alpine climber for edelweiss.

A dear friend of mine was once motoring in Kent, and suddenly touched the arm of his brother, who was driving, to draw this relative's attention to a pretty little plant in an adjacent hedgerow. The driver instinctively turned the steering-wheel in the direction of his brother's gaze, the motor took the pretty little plant and the hedgerow at one leap, and the next thing my dear friend knew was that he was lying on his face (or what was left of it) in a ploughed field, with a pound and a half of the richest Kentish loam imbedded in either lung. (The little plant's name, by the way, was *Traveller's Joy*.)

When a puncture or breakdown occurs, and you are forced to spend the morning on the roadside, dreaming of luncheon and wondering why the thunder you didn't have enough sense to go by train, an attitude of cheerful optimism will do much to relieve the tension of the situation and lessen the tedium of this unfortunate interlude. But do not, I beg you, commit the indiscretion of chaffing the chauffeur about the size of his feet while he is lying on his back underneath the car. To tickle his ears with a straw, or drop portions of the macadamised roadway down his trouser-legs is in the worst possible taste. Encourage him, rather, with cheering words appropriate to the occasion. Assure him that you are in no hurry; that personally you prefer arriving at your office in the City after dark; that even if you *are* dining with a rich uncle in Portman Square, it doesn't matter at all keeping him waiting an hour or two.

Whatever happens, it is wrong for the motor passenger to express emotion of any kind, either by facial contortions or bodily wriggings. When, in your opinion, the car has taken a corner at excessive speed, it is useless to writhe or give vent to your feelings in a loud whistling sigh of relief. If it becomes necessary to pull the motor up short, you will not be assisting the chauffeur by placing your feet against the front of the machine and pushing as hard as you can. By an invariable law of Nature

it is physically impossible for a passenger to retard the progress of any vehicle by pressing his feet against the splashboard in front of him. This fact, however, is frequently disregarded by nervous persons—you can see them at any time of the day or night squirming down St James's Street in a taxi—whose foolish and ineffectual efforts add considerably to the irritation of the driver.

Again, if the situation is one of imminent danger—if a hay-cart containing a comatose yokel emerges from a side-road at the bottom of a steep hill, at the very moment when the chauffeur has discovered that his brakes are not working—it is simply futile to throw your arms round the driver's neck, burst into tears, and scream loudly. Such action only tends to obscure the view of the man at the wheel. The thing to do on such an occasion is to select a spot in the hay-cart where you may alight with the least possible physical discomfort (avoiding, if possible, the person of the comatose yokel and the pitchfork which he is in the habit of carrying), and then let Nature take its course. On recovering consciousness it is customary to look wildly round and exclaim, "Where am I?" On being told exactly where you are—whether in the police-station, hospital or mortuary, as the case may be—you then ask anxiously if the motor is much damaged. (This, of course, only if it is not fully covered by insurance.) When your mind is relieved

on this point, you can enquire at your leisure after the health and safety of the other occupants of the car.

One word more. When you are thrown from a motor—owing to sudden and unexpected impact with a house, cow, village idiot, oldest inhabitant, etc.—always try and fall on the soft part of the back. Practice this on your bed when you retire to rest at night. Try it in your bath in the morning. Of course, if there is a tree handy, and you can grasp the branches in your upward flight, thereby remaining suspended like Ahitophel (or was it Ahab?) until the local squire comes along and arrests you for stealing his apples, you will escape the worst consequences of a motor accident. But this is not always feasible.

No. 5--ON THE ART OF KEEPING A DOG

WHICH of us has not, at some period or other of his misspent life, kept an indoor dog? Whether he be a humble journalist who wears celluloid cuff-protectors and lives in a garret where there is scarcely room to swing a cat, or a country cousin spending a mad week-end at the "Ritz" where he shares a pink-and-gold bathroom with an American bullionaire, the ordinary individual is always more or less tempted to seek comfort in the companionship of that animal which Maeterlinck has so truly termed the "friend of man." Where can we make sure of finding such a wealth of silent and respectful sympathy as is always to be obtained in the society of this, the very brightest of our dumb friends? Tastes differ, of course. Spinsters who live at Surbiton are popularly supposed to share their stucco villas with some harmless necessary cat. I know a famous actor who delights in the possession of an aviary, and who has turned his bathroom into an aquarium. (He owns a bullfinch which whistles "Home, Sweet Home," with such exquisite pathos that the tears course down its cheeks, and a parrot which recites "The Village

Blacksmith" till the sparks fly out of its beak.)

Again, some people prefer children to dogs, principally, I think, because a licence is not required for the former. I have not a word to say against children. I like them. I can play with a toy train as long as anyone. I love to have a drum beaten close to my elbow while I am trying to compose a masterly monograph on the subject of the Better Housing of Inebriates. I delight in having a hoop driven through my legs when I am walking in Kensington Gardens thinking out the plot of a new musical comedy. Nothing pleases me more than being asked intelligent questions by the "heirs of all the ages." When they inquire anxiously why I look like that, and whether I always have, and what I take for it, and if my head isn't cold at the top, and why I wear my chest so close to my watch chain, and so on, I never leave the room in a rage, slamming the door behind me. My replies are always in the most perfect taste, though they may occasionally take the form of an inkpot. All the same, as an earnest canophile, I assert that dogs are infinitely superior to children in a great many respects, and if I were to be given the choice between residing in a house inhabited by nine healthy, soaring human boys, or occupying a mews in which a dozen dogs had made their permanent

abode, I should unhesitatingly select the latter as my domicile.

Certainly, children never jump up on to your shirt-front with wet, muddy feet. But then they cannot retrieve your gold-headed malacca walking-stick from the Serpentine, if you happen to have thrown it at a sheldrake which has irritated you to the verge of madness by quacking at least a semitone flat. They do not, perhaps, allow their affection to outrun their manners, and lick the end of your nose when you are talking to them sternly about digging up the flower-beds in a futile search for hidden treasure ; nor do they bite your rich old uncle Henry in the calf of the leg when he pays you a Sunday visit, under the very natural impression that he is merely the man who has come to wind the clocks. But then they do not listen attentively to all your remarks and wag their tails politely when you commit verbal *facetiae* which have failed to raise a smile upon the faces of more human friends. And when the genial burglar enters your flat and attempts to make away with the silver spoons which it has taken you years to collect from various restaurants, children do not rush out and hold him firmly by the nape of the trousers until you feel in a sufficiently heroic mood to emerge from under the bed and telephone for the police. Dogs do all this and more. They are indeed an indispensable adjunct to the home of

every ratepayer. To the peer in his palace, the orator in his oratory, the author in his hovel, the motto is still applicable, "Dog me, dog my love!"

True, there has always existed a popular prejudice against persons who are fond of either horses or dogs. It is generally supposed that the horse-dealer is inclined to economise facts; that those delightful specimens of frail humanity who wander about Regent Street, bearing in their arms an assortment of comatose puppies, which they attempt to foist off upon their more credulous fellow-men as pedigree chows—it is said, I repeat, that these men have very little real talent for veracity. Well, that may be so. As Shakespeare remarked long ago, "Those whom the dogs love lie young." But I will never believe that the society of a pet pug or the intimate companionship of a Pomeranian boarhound can have anything but a sublime and uplifting effect upon the morals of its owner. "An honest dog," as some philosopher has observed, "is the noblest work of man."

If in the last four pages I have succeeded in proving that the possession of a dog is essential to human happiness, it only remains for me to throw out a few valuable hints upon the question of this noble animal's treatment in sickness and in health.

There are one or two rules which have been laid

down from time immemorial on this subject, which it would perhaps be as well to recapitulate.

"Let sleeping dogs lie" is an excellent old adage, the observance of which cannot be too strongly insisted upon. Very often, on your way to spend a rollicking afternoon at the Hippodrome, you will observe a large mastiff lying spread out across the pavement in front of some public-house. The animal is asleep; he is snoring loudly, wrapped in what a bard has called "the arms of Orpheus." The question that naturally occurs to you is this: Shall you assume the expression of a Mr G. P. Huntley, poke the dog in the ribs with your umbrella and say, "Hullo-ullo-ullo! You little rascal! Get up this minute! I say, get up this minute, you little rascal! What?" This, let me tell you at once, would be a fatal move on your part, unless, of course, you were qualifying for admission to the Pasteur Institute. No; the correct course to adopt is this: Call a cab and drive at once to the Athenæum Club, where you can gaiter a good-natured bishop (one does not buttonhole bishops) and tell him all about it. Or else assume a bandy-legged attitude and pass quietly by on both sides of the prostrate animal without attracting its attention.

There is nothing more painful than being bitten in the leg by a dog—except, of course, being bitten in both legs by two dogs. When this accident

occurs, the injured limb should be worn in a sling for at least a fortnight, and the dog should be blindfolded, led outside the city gates, and shot at day-break.

A thing you will often hear quite respectable people say is, "Give a dog a bad name and hang him." Never take any notice of a remark of this sort. In the first place, it is quite unnecessary to give a dog a name at all, as I know by experience. I had a bull-terrier once which was a nameless orphan, nobody's darling and all the rest of it, and had escaped from the Dogs' Home only fifteen minutes before the lethal chamber was to have been nicely aired for its reception. It attached itself to me in Battersea Park when I was bicycling there one Sunday. I then and there made a pet of it and took it home, where the house-carpenter prised it off my calf with the aid of an instrument which is known in America, I believe, as a star-bangled spanner. People, especially ladies, used often to ask me, "What do you call your dog?" and I always replied quite truthfully that I did not call it at all. I had tried calling it, I explained, but as it never paid the slightest attention, I was at last forced to adopt towards the sagacious animal an attitude of dignified silence. There were drawbacks to this treatment, however. On one occasion the indignant father of a small child, which my terrier happened to be worrying in Grosvenor

Square one afternoon, shouted out to me quite sharply, "Hi, you! Call your dog off my Nellie, can't you?" I could not. As I pointed out to the man, he had the advantage of me in knowing his child's name, whereas I did not know the name of my bull terrier; consequently, if any action were to be taken to save the situation, it was obviously for him to call his Nellie off my dog.

I will assume then, for argument's sake, that you have bought a more or less faithful hound from one of those purveyors of lapdogs who live in St Martin's Lane, who will sell you a dozen goldfish for eighteenpence if you are not very firm with them. Your first care must be to make sure that the dear thing has plenty of exercise. Some people provide for this by hiring a blind man to lead their dogs about on a string; but this is an expensive and (in these days of motor 'buses) a dangerous form of luxury. The best plan is to take the little beast with you when you start to go to your office in the morning, so arranging that your route lies past the Army and Navy Stores. Here you can leave the creature in charge of a charming bearded official at the door, who will deliver it to you intact on your way home in the evening. Ponto (or whatever the brute's name is) will get quite sufficient exercise biting the valuable Spitzes left at the entrance by dowager duchesses who have popped in to buy sevenpence worth of smilax to decorate

the dinner-table, or by barking derisively at those foolish persons who *will* try to enter by the door which is marked "OUT" in plain capital letters.

We now come to the all-important question of diet. Mrs Earle would no doubt tell you to feed your dog on rice and vermicelli, varied by an occasional brazil nut or a handful of Plasmon chocolate. Dogs, unfortunately, have different views ; and if you were to present Fido (or whatever his name happens to be) with a pound and a half of monkey-nuts, and expect him to make a satisfying meal off these dainties, you would not only prove your unfitness to own a dog, but your licence would in all probability be revoked (or in any case endorsed) by the committee of the R.S.P.C.A. What you must give your dog is bones (or *are* bones, if you like). Any bones will do, except chicken bones. There is a very good bone shop at the corner of — but, after all, there are so many that it seems hardly worth my while recommending any particular one. These bones should be served hot, with a dash of gravy and one or two dog biscuits, on the front doorstep, not so close to the letter-box as to prevent the postman from delivering your morning's mail, nor yet so near the bell as to cause any danger of skidding to short-sighted visitors.

When the dog has finished his meal, which must be supplied once a day only, in the evening, he should be taught to wipe his mouth on the mat

or scraper, run up into the drawing-room and kiss master good-night, and then hasten to the best bedroom, curl himself up on the sofa, with folded hands and feet, and fall into a profound repose. Mind you, I am altogether averse to a dog being taught tricks of any kind. It is degrading to the animal's character. How would *you* like to sit up, with a lump of sugar balanced on the end of your nose, until some idiot said "Paid for!" or to be asked what you would do for the present Government and be expected to lie down on the hearthrug and simulate an untimely and premature decease? Dogs are probably—with the sole exception of actor-managers—the most self-conscious of living creatures. They are acutely sensitive to ridicule, and it is a shame and a scandal that they should ever be made to perform antics which tend to lower their self-respect.

I have confined myself exclusively to the consideration of domestic, pet, or lap hounds. I have not touched upon the idiosyncrasies of the various breeds of sporting dogs; of the faithful retriever who secures the running pheasant which you have struck almost too gently in the lower part of the back; of the Gordon setter who points with a quivering tail at the grouse that lies concealed in the bonny purple heather; of the terrier that undermines the elusive but succulent truffle from the foot of the blasted oak in the ancestral park;

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of the spotted Dalmatian carriage dog that used to run with such native dignity beneath the family barouche. If, however, I have said anything that shall tend to ameliorate the treatment of our domestic pets, which are grossly ill-treated by being addressed by undignified pet-names in Mayfair drawing-rooms and being subsequently buried with full military honours in the nearest ashpit, my labours shall not have been entirely in vain.

No. 6—ON BREAKFASTING IN BED

THAT rollicking matutinal meal which we are apt to designate by the name of breakfast is one upon which every Englishman worthy of the name of Briton—or, for the matter of that, every Briton worthy of the name of Englishman—prides himself with more than his usual allowance of insular conceit. This unique feast, at the very thought of which the foreigner turns pale, has very rightly come to be regarded as an integral part of our national existence. Without it we should most of us be quite unwilling to face the business of life. "The daily task, the common round" (so called because for many business men it generally resolves itself into a round of golf on a common) would not be undertaken so cheerfully were it not founded upon a solid basis of eggs and bacon.

That daily ceremonial of ours in which sausages play so prominent a part is essentially British; it has no place in the constitution of the sister nations of the world. The genial Frenchman does not begin to yearn for a light *soufflé* of frogs until mid-day; the German's passion for underdone sauerkraut does not ripen until the sun is high

in the heavens. With Britons it is different. The "nation of shopwalkers," as Napoleon called us, may rightly regard the love of breakfast as a part of its imperial heritage. Almost the first words that the Englishman addresses to his wife in the morning are, "The coffee's as cold as ice, as usual," or "Who the thunder's left the cover off the bacon-dish?" Indeed, until he has partaken heartily of a diet of porridge (or, if he is a Scotsman, haggis), kidneys (or, if an Irishman, potatoes), buttered eggs (or, if a Welshman, rabbits), and mackerel (or, if Mr Eustace Miles, nuts), he does not feel inclined for those "crowded hours of glorious life" which stretch so invitingly before him.

Breakfast is not, of course, an entirely modern institution. In the "good old days" (which, by the by, were not as good nor nearly as old as the ones we enjoy to-day), when every statesman retired to bed with a bottle of port under his pillow and a request to his valet to call him next Tuesday, the idea of such a meal would have been scouted as palpably absurd. Later on, however, Dr Johnson, the eminent lexicographer, and his cronies assembled daily at the breakfast table to crack a tin of sardines with one another, and this social custom prevailed until the close of Mr Gladstone's career.

Nowadays we are not so sociably inclined in the early morning. Most of us have not got up, and

those that have are very peevish. At the break of dawn we can only just tolerate the presence of our own family, and the idea of a merry breakfast with a number of hearty friends affects us with a kind of mental *mal-de-mer*. In order to avoid this, some persons are misguided enough to breakfast in bed. That this is a pernicious habit I know from bitter experience.

I was staying at a hotel (or at *an* hotel, if you prefer it) in Boston, Mass., U.S.A., some years ago. Feeling tired one morning, I rang the bell and told the waiter that I would have breakfast in bed. I then turned over and fell asleep at once like a tired child.

About four hours later I awoke to find a heavy weight oppressing my diaphragm. On looking up I discovered that a large tray containing my breakfast had been dumped down upon my chest, pinning me securely to the bed. After a few struggles I succeeded in getting my head and hands free, but dared not move further for fear of upsetting the tea-pot, which was balanced precariously on one corner of the tray. With infinite pains I managed at last to secure a boiled egg. This I was about to crack when it eluded my grasp and disappeared suddenly inside the bed, where it rolled along for a short distance and finally nestled confidently up against my left leg. The egg was an extremely hot one, and I was afraid to move for fear of breaking it.

(I bear the brand on my thigh to this day.) There was still, however, another egg on the tray, and this I opened and commenced to eat. It was a trying operation. Owing to my cramped position I was forced to carry each spoonful a distance of at least a yard from the tray to my mouth, and as little of the contents reached my lips as if I had been a Chinaman wearing a *cangue*. I agreed with Burns in wishing that some power the giftie had gi'ed us to feed ourselves as ithers feed us, but to no purpose. Also, the waiter had forgotten the salt, and an egg without salt is intolerable. I tried to reach the bell at the top of my bed, and in doing so disturbed the equilibrium of the tea-pot, which at once overturned and flooded the butter-dish. After a little while I gave up the pastime of egg-balancing as requiring too great a mental strain, and decided to make a meal off toast.

Here let me give you a kindly word of counsel. *Never* eat toast in bed. Do not be tempted by family physicians, nurses, executors, or legatees. For some reason or other, toast (when devoured in a recumbent attitude) has a habit of breaking itself up into small fragments, each of which finds its way between the sheets and causes the most acute discomfort to anyone with a delicate cuticle. I am still pitted with toast-marks in several vital places as a result of this one adventure.

When I had completed my so-called repast I

made up my mind that I would get up, go downstairs to the restaurant and get something to eat ; but, alas ! as the saying is, I had reckoned without my toast. The tray which overlaid me was too heavy to lift off my chest, and, though I managed to raise it temporarily a few inches off the bed, the problem of how to wriggle out from underneath it and at the same time hold it aloft and avoid upsetting the milk-jug was an insoluble one. I wrestled with it in vain. My efforts only resulted in a severe effusion of blood to the head combined with the spraining of my left patella. At last I gave it up and sank back exhausted.

Late that night a chamber-maid entered my room for the purpose of dusting the chair-legs, and found me lying prone beneath the remains of my breakfast, in a semi-conscious condition, from which I was with difficulty aroused. After sprinkling my hands with scent and chafing my face with a hair-brush, the manager of the hotel succeeded at last in bringing me back to life. You will not, therefore, think it mere prejudice on my part if I beg you to think twice before you consent to commit the indiscretion of breakfasting in bed.

No. 7—ON TAKING EXERCISE

I CAN never read the reflections of that ripe philosopher, Caractacus, without being amazed at his marvellous insight into human nature. "*Exercitatio et temperantia*," said he, speaking (of course) in the vernacular of the period, "*possunt conservare aliquid nostri pristini roboris etiam in senectute*." Exercise and temperance (I translate for the benefit of those who have had the privilege of a public-school education) can preserve something of our pristine strength, even in old age.

Of temperance I will say nothing, not because I am unable or unwilling to do so, but merely because I do not feel convinced that the subject would interest my readers. But I am quite determined to say something about exercise and its effects upon the system, regarded purely in its relation to the moral and physical welfare of the community.

There is more nonsense talked upon this subject than upon any other, any number of young men daily ruining their constitutions in an endeavour to take exercise in a way that Nature neither intended nor designed.

From the days of my nonage I have paid particular

attention to this important matter. As a youth I remember being thrilled by an advertisement of Blackley's patent Home Exerciser, which I saw in a copy of *Back Chat*. There was a particularly striking picture of two gentlemen conversing amicably together in a bathroom in a manner which was exceptionally lifelike. One of these persons was an obese hectic-looking individual who seemed to be a sort of a cross between a retired volunteer colonel and a respectable pork-butcher; instinctively one felt that he lived at Camberley, and was a member of the Tariff Reform League. The other was a strenuous, active, athletic young Apollo, with a chest like a bison and a waist which one of Paquin's mannequins might have envied. I think he was a haberdasher's assistant from the way he parted his hair, but I am not positive about this. He may have been a piano-tuner. He was apparently explaining to his stout friend that if the latter would only consent to use Blackley's patent Home Exerciser five times a day, before and after meals, he would soon regain that lost symmetry of form and figure for whose recovery he had long ceased to offer a reward. The old gentleman had no repartee ready at the moment, and could only appear confused and promise to do better another time. It was a striking scene.

Excited, as I say, by this beautiful picture, so typical of all that is best and noblest in our British

home-life, I at once hurried to the Stores and bought a patent "Exerciser," nailed it up to the wall of my bathroom, and commenced practising to increase my chest measurement in accordance with the printed instructions.

The diagram of suitable exercises supplied with the machine was rather difficult to understand. It depicted a man with about fourteen arms and a varied assortment of legs which he was waving round his body in an alarming manner. In time, however, I mastered the meaning of this illustration, and started on some of the least intricate of the evolutions laid down in the diagram.

Whether it was that I had not nailed the Exerciser sufficiently firmly to the wall or that I had grossly under-estimated my own strength I know not. The fact remains that when I had planted my feet on the cork linoleum mat (suitably inscribed with the legend, "Welcome!"), seized the handles of the Exerciser with both hands, and leant back as far as I could, the dado of the wall gave way and I was suddenly precipitated headlong backwards into the porcelain bath, dragging with me a valuable oleograph portrait of the late Prince Consort and a priceless china vase given to me by a rich maiden aunt and engraved with a picturesque view of Clacton-on-Sea. I did not so much mind breaking these heirlooms or denting the bath with my spine; what I objected to was the loss of self-respect

which I naturally suffered. Still, with a display of that indomitable pertinacity which has brought Englishmen to the front on more than one occasion, I persevered in my exercises, until eventually my chest attained a measurement of 36 inches (Fahrenheit) and I was obliged to fasten my evening shirt-front with a safety pin in place of the dainty coral solitaire stud that had long been the talk of Mayfair.

Such was my physique that on one occasion when I was walking through Trafalgar Square in a motor cap, some of the younger members of an "Unemployed" procession, bearing a banner inscribed "Curse Your Charity!" mistook me for a recruiting sergeant. They begged me with tears in their eyes to press a shilling into their hands and lead them gently but firmly to the nearest tavern, there to swear an oath of unfaltering allegiance and fealty to their King and country. Again, several fellow members of my club took to addressing me as "Captain" instead of "Here, you!" or "Hi!" as they had hitherto been in the habit of doing, and I began to entertain serious thoughts of joining the Territorials.

Alas! one day I caught a severe chill (while reading the press notices of my latest work) and was laid up in bed for a fortnight. At the end of that period my chest had shrunk so terribly that my waistcoat hung in folds around my neck, and

by the time I was well enough to sit up and eat grapes, I had not the courage to start exercising again.

I could easily give you many similar instances of the time that has been wasted on physical development. An old uncle of mine tried to improve his health by doing Sandow exercises daily. He bought a very heavy pair of dumb-bells which he used to swing round his head every morning before breakfast, until he was so exhausted that he didn't want any breakfast at all. He, too, grew to see the folly of adopting such drastic measures. And now he never uses the dumb-bells, except occasionally to throw at my aunt, who is rather deaf and whose attention it is difficult to attract in any other way.

There are in the social and political world many eminent and distinguished men, in whose hands repose the destinies of our Empire, whose only form of exercise consists in putting on their great-coats twice a day without the assistance of the hall-porter. Yet these statesmen, bishops, authors and financiers, are every whit as healthy as those of their fellows who think it expedient to run round Battersea Park every evening pursued by the ribald jeers of local urchins. Exercise, like self-denial, honesty, or filial piety, can easily be overdone.

I am confident that for the man of sedentary habits it is a grave mistake to take violent exercise. Let him spring from his couch at dawn, wearing what

Stevenson has called a "glorious morning face;" let him bolt a hurried meal and run wildly to the nearest Tube station, arriving just in time to watch the lift descend without him; let him reach his office half-an-hour late, to find that four clients have called in his absence and expressed their intention of transferring their patronage elsewhere; let him work for eight solid hours at a draughty desk in a room in which the fire smokes, with a barrel-organ playing outside; let him hasten home at seven o'clock to his wife and family, to see the former just on the point of starting for the theatre with a military relative, and to hear that the latter are down with measles; then let him consider the question of healthful exercise, deliberately and without prejudice. Will he go out and give the dog a run? Not he. He will ring loudly for his carpet slippers and spend the rest of the evening in a condition of pleasurable coma which will do him far more good than a twelve-mile country walk or any number of hours' gymnastics on the parallel bars.

No. 8—ON BUYING A FUR COAT

WHEN winter holds us in its grip, when the snowflakes pat the skylight with their soft white fingers, we are many of us tempted to hasten to the nearest fur emporium and urge the proprietor to weld together a sufficient number of rabbit skins to ensure for us a suitable shelter from the stormy blast. If there be among my readers any young persons who propose to do anything of the sort, I implore them not to be hasty in effecting the purchase of a fur coat.

I once was young. I too have known what it is to spring out of bed on a cold winter's morning, gaze thoughtfully at my bath for a few moments, and then climb cheerfully back between the blankets. Alas! I had no wise mentor to give me the benefit of his good advice. I was alone in the world, or, at any rate, as much alone as duns and creditors would permit. And so it came to pass that in early life I took an irrevocable step which I have ever since regretted. Let me explain.

'Twas winter. The merry bells of Yule rang out across the snow. The robins were singing as though their little hearts would break. I sat and shivered

at my desk. The draught blew in from the window and fluttered the papers at my elbow. The ice on my inkpot told me that there was skating on the Serpentine. Suddenly there came a knock at the door. My heart stood still. Instinctively I concealed myself as best I could behind the plated toast-rack which was all that remained of my frugal breakfast. The door opened. My heart stood still. But oh, joy! Oh, rapture! Oh, relief! 'Twas but the postman. And in his hand he bore—a registered letter. My heart stood still.

Letters of any kind were a source of excitement to me in those days. My morning mail generally consisted of ominous blue documents, or of envelopes addressed to myself by my own familiar hand, containing articles which editors now tumble over one another in their anxiety to obtain. A registered letter was a perfectly novel experience, and in this case a delightful one as well, for it contained a cheque for nearly £50, a noble sum, payment for a book of 120,000 words which had only taken me three years to write and which seventeen publishers had already declined.

Fifty pounds! I was a rich man—rich beyond the dreams of caviare!

How should I best spend this newly acquired wealth? This was the question that I put to myself at once. Disinterested friends to whom I propounded the problem suggested that I should

celebrate the occasion by inviting them to a Gargantuan feast at some fashionable restaurant. Others urged me to subscribe to the Hospital Fund and thus lay the foundations of a prospective peerage, or to invest the money in Consols so that I might always be sure of having thirty whole shillings to take home with me to my family on every first of April.

I thought the matter over very carefully. I remembered the draughts in my garret, and, with a firm and resolute chin and a set face, sallied forth to a shop in the Edgware Road and bought a fur coat.

It was a magnificent garment. It was fringed with mink ; its collar was the pelt of an unplucked otter ; its sleeves were loaded with imitation astrachan ; all down its front were frogs of thick braid ; its pockets were lined with chamois leather.

I paid for it, put it on, and was at once transformed into a Polish count with a slight dash of bandmaster. I was a proud man that day. I wore my purchase at every meal, and would have gone to bed in it, had I not been afraid of rumpling the mink. Life assumed a different, a more pleasing, aspect. I was actually glad to be alive. My gladness was, alas ! short-lived.

Mark you the tragic sequel. Before I bought that coat I was a free man. I could dine at cheap restaurants in Soho where one was given an excellent

meal and a bottle of *vin ordinaire* for 1s. 6d. I could travel third-class, or even under the seat, if I desired it.

After I had begun to wear this garment, the whole course of my life was changed. Did I appear at a restaurant (in the character of a Russian nobleman), every garçon hastened across to do me honour; the head waiter reserved for me his best table and insisted on ordering me his most expensive viands and his choicest wine; the *patron* himself held prolonged conversations with me on purely irrelevant subjects.

Did I arrive at a railway station, porters wrestled with one another for the privilege of relieving me of my Gladstone bag, guards pushed me into first-class carriages and locked the door, station-masters with tall hats brought me foot-warmers and luncheon baskets.

In the street it was just the same. Crossing-sweepers who had hitherto contented themselves with addressing me as "Major" now called me "My Lord."

What could I do but try to live up to the reputation of my fur coat? I was forced to tip everybody within sight. My life became a financial nightmare; bankruptcy stared me in the face. I dined at expensive grill-rooms; I travelled in reserved sleeping-saloons; I gave away whole pennies at a time as a reward for the untutored

instinct of the tactful crossing-sweepers. Waiters battened on my bounty, grew rich, and set up for themselves near Earl's Court. I decorated Station-masters with diamond pins. My prodigality exceeded the bounds of legitimate philanthropy. I flung handfuls of silver at anyone who approached within a radius of ten yards of my unplucked otter. My existence was one long orgy of generosity.

At last my friends became alarmed and consulted a fur specialist. My funds gave out. My family physician ordered me a trip to a warm climate where furs are never worn. With a sigh of relief I sold my famous coat to an impoverished actor who was engaged to play the leading part in a provincial company touring with a melodrama entitled *Under the Czar*, in which a real Siberian snowstorm was the leading attraction.

Now, as I sit and shiver once more at the brink of my frozen ink-pot, wearing a humble "Aquascutum," with my feet wrapped up in *The Winning Post* (the warmest paper I know), I recall the occasion of my past fur-madness with a feeling akin to terror. I rejoice to think that I am again able to enjoy the simple, precarious, economical existence which is the privilege of all who lead the literary life, but is utterly denied to those who commit the egregious indiscretion of buying a fur coat.

Once more the moral is plain.

No. 9—ON DOMESTIC SYMPHONY

I HAVE always had a weakness for Music. Even as a child I displayed symptoms of musical precocity which suggest that in me the world has lost one of its greatest conductors. At the unusual age of eighteen months I led a duet of piano-organs from my nursery window, successfully piloting them through the intricate symphonies of the "Dollar Princess" of the period. A few years later, while enjoying my customary constitutional in Russell Square, I was observed to throw my rattle with some violence at a euphonium-player of Teutonic origin. He was standing at the side entrance of a Temperance Hotel, performing "The Lost Chord" in a manner which suggested that it would be a merciful dispensation of Providence if that particular group of notes were irretrievably mislaid. The worthy musician's rendering of this theme did not apparently commend itself to my delicate if untutored ear, and I repeatedly thrust aside my bottle with every symptom of disgust, and declined to take any interest in my mid-day meal until Sir Arthur Sullivan's longsuffering masterpiece had wailed to a welcome close.

I only tell you this in order to prove that I am fully qualified to discourse upon the subject of Music, of which indeed I am no armchair critic. I can play Braga's "Serenata" on the violin, and most of "The Merry Peasant" on the piano. On the latter instrument I have been known to achieve success in an involved sonata in five flats, without skidding off the black notes on to the white ones more than twice during the entire performance. I used to play the clarionet too—an instrument which emits sounds as of a flute singing through its nose. But there, we are all musicians nowadays, or if we are not, we conceal the fact. And yet it is not so very long ago that Wagner was to the Society humorist what the "mother-in-law" still is to the music-hall comedian. The complexity of the great composer's orchestration was considered as good an excuse for a joke in the drawing-room as is the mention of conjugal infidelity in the gallery of a second-class Palace of Varieties.

We have changed all that, however. The private buffoon sits as silent as the rest of us through seven weary hours of *The Ring*. Scores of intelligent human beings, and many who are not noted for their intelligence, listen rapturously to the most intricate and involved compositions of the masters of music.

To the critic or the casual observer nothing in recent years, perhaps, has been so striking as the

size and enthusiasm of the audience which welcomed, time after time, the most fantastic and incomprehensible of the works of Richard Strauss. I refer, of course, to the *Symphonia Domestica*. This, in my opinion, constitutes the final and crowning test of music-worship. No audience that has survived more than one dose of such occult cacophony can be accused of inability to appreciate the art of music at its highest.

The *Domestic Symphony* is a marvellous piece of writing. The orchestration is amazing and unique. There is nothing in the world at all like it. At least, I hope not. I am glad, very glad, to have heard it. I am convinced that I shall never willingly hear it again.

There is one thing, indeed, about Strauss's methods which no one can help admiring. And that is the fact that he spares neither trouble nor expense (to others) in his attempt to ensure that his compositions shall be rendered as effectively as possible.

For the *Domestic Symphony* a specially large orchestra is required, comprising, besides the strings and usual instruments of wind and percussion—

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1 Oboe d'Amore. | 7 French Horns. |
| 3 Ocarinas, | 6 Saxophones. |
| 2 Cors de Douleur. | 6 Sackbuts. |
| 1 Esprit de Cor. | 38 Bass Drums. |

1 Big Drum.	2 Tuba.
1 Comb.	1 Triangle.
1 Tam-tam.	1 Assistant Triangle.
8 Cymbals.	4 Xylophones.
45 Shawms.	3 Megaphones.
5 Tambourines	1 Musical Box.
9 Tympani.	1 Cuckoo Clock.
1 Tympanum.	1 Stop Watch.
4 Bassoons.	2 Sarusaphones.
5 Contra-Bassoons.	2 Jews'-Harps.
3 Deputy-Bassoons.	27 Concertinas.
2 Sets of Bones.	1 Grand Organ.
1 Mouth Organ.	

The *Domestic Symphony* is supposed to describe a "day in the composer's life." As that day includes two baths, the realism of the description stands in danger of being jeopardised in the ears of all critics who have any acquaintance with the domestic habits of composers. Indeed, I cannot help thinking that the "bath" theme is merely introduced for the sake of the still more subtle "soap" motif that underlies it. As one listens to the kettledrum's excellent rendering of this passage (and, by the by, I should have added "27 kettledrums" to the list given above), one can almost picture the delirious composer in his dressing-gown throwing the soap at the bath with deadly accuracy from the other end of the room. The

six saxophones cry aloud in triumph every time the bath is hit. The deputy-bassoons and one of the sackbuts bleat derisively whenever a miss is registered.

I was not fortunate enough to possess a programme on the two occasions upon which I had the pleasure of listening to the *Symphony*. A good deal, therefore, was doubtless left to my imagination. I may be wrong in my interpretation of the music, but it seemed to me, listening with all possible attention, that the composer's life, as described in his composition, was a very eventful one. It appeared to me that, after the two baths mentioned above, some Sandow exercises, a bout of Ju-Jitsu with a garrulous elephant, and a quick-lunch in the Strand, the hero of this symphonic poem paid a brief visit to the parrot-house at the Zoo, attended a dog-fight, was the victim of a railway accident, referee'd at a football match, was run over and back by a motor 'bus, partook of a hearty breakfast, thanked the Governor and warders for their kindness, and walked with a firm step on to the concert platform.

It was all very exquisite and very haunting.

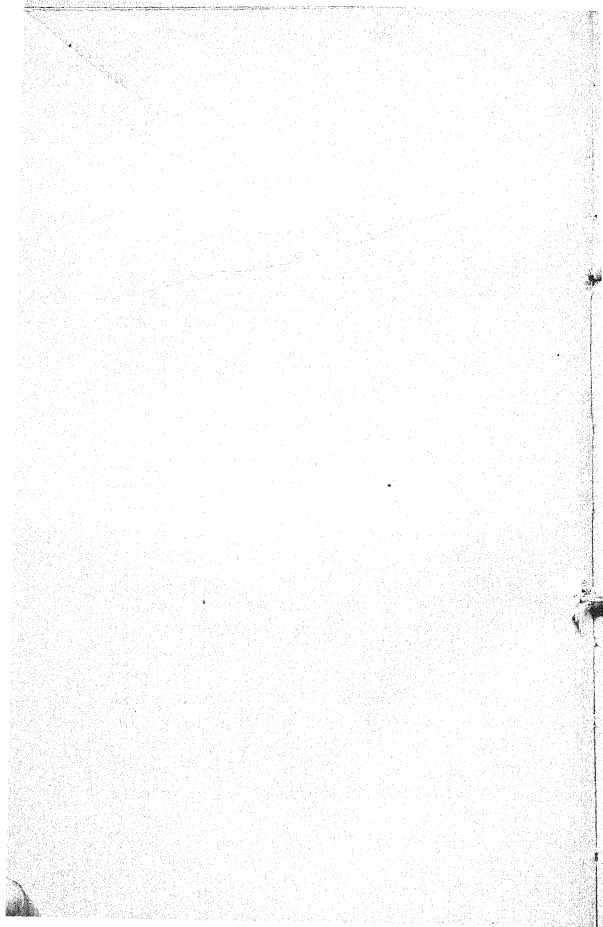
The portion of the *Symphony* that I enjoyed most was where the oboes, bass-drums, and tympani gave out the railway-accident motif in common time, while the tuba, xylophones, grand- and mouth-organs were busy with the dog-fight theme. The

peculiar tone-colour produced by the ocarinas and the stop-watch in the Sandow motif (which is treated contrapuntally, of course,) is very noticeable. The polyphony is superb.

I also liked the *accelerato* section of the "quick-lunch" theme ; passed from the triangles to the tambourine, and so *in arpeggio* to the bones ; dwelt on passionately by the shawms ; and, after a short and very suggestive and characteristic passage for muted Jews'-harps, taken up in an ascending scale, in sixths, by cymbals, megaphones, and comb. This leads naturally to the brief but brilliant *coda*, darkened with clouds of jealousy and distrust, which, with a reiteration of the principal themes, brings the soul-stirring symphony to a strepitous conclusion.

It was all very haunting and very exquisite. I am glad to have heard it, and survived.

II
MASTERMINDS



No. 1—FRANK RICHARDSON

WE live in an age of personal reminiscence. The trivialities that go to make up the domestic lives of our public characters are matters of vital interest to the majority of us. No apology, therefore, is needed for this humble attempt to present a vivid pen picture of one of our most eminent and notorious Empire-builders, of a Superman whose personality is shrouded in an atmosphere of romance, the very mention of whose name sends the hot blood surging through the veins.

Few persons who study the brilliant, but alas! infrequent writings of this master of English prose can form any adequate mental portrait of this profound thinker, this over-ripe scholar, this literary purist, whose *Juvenilia* are rapidly becoming classics, whose maturer compositions bulk so large in the public eye to-day. If I were to take my readers to the Carlton Restaurant and point out a rotund, bald, hectic individual, sitting at a table near the band, they would never believe that this could be Frank Richardson. They would be right; it is not.

Let me describe the man as I often see him, hurry

ing down the Strand, with a bundle of priceless manuscripts under his arm, on his way to the pulp mills. That tall Gibson figure, svelte, and well-groomed (as the lady novelist would say), that martial bearing, that vigilant eye (or rather, those two vigilant eyes), that ~~stout~~ chin, that nose (for the moment I cannot think of a suitable epithet), those long, nervous, taper feet, all the prominent national characteristics which combine to make us Englishmen what we are (a poor excuse, however), are here embodied in the single person of one unique individual.

I will not waste any time in praising his immaculate boots, his lounge suit which fits him like a glove, as though it had been made for him, his tasteful tie; for such things are mere excrescences, as it were, upon the profile of this remarkable man—mere barnacles upon his sheer hulk; but no sketch of one who has affected his generation so profoundly would be complete without some mention of the crowning glory of his personal attire; I refer, of course, to his hat.

I am not as a rule easily moved by the contemplation of any mere sartorial display. But I am never quite able to repress a thrill of genuine emotion when I gaze upon Frank Richardson's so-called hat and observe an article of a weird, unearthly, light-blue colour shining out through the December fog like an opal on the shirt-front of a dramatic

critic. Why the hat is blue I know not, any more than I know why certain pills are pink—(*Happy Thought*: "Blue bowlers for brainy bachelors!"), but blue it is, and blue it must remain.

Our hero is not, of course, the first man to set the seal of his individuality upon his head-gear. Sir Squire Bancroft's Eiffel hat has long been the most prominent feature of Berkeley Square; Mr Caine's sombrero and Mr Keir Hardie's stalking-cap add greatly to the gaiety of nations. Mr Winston Churchill himself has been seen to walk across the Horseguards Parade trying to Think Imperially in a box billy-cock. But the Richardsonian hat is a veritable portent. Nor would any description of this valiant soul be complete without some allusion to the cerulean beaver—at once his trademark and his *panache*.

How is it, you may ask, that I am able to display so intimate a knowledge of the private history of this literary stylist who is one of the most bashful of men? The truth is that he and I were children together. We shared the same roof at Dr Worthington's Academy for Backward, Imbecile and Refractory Boys in Surrey. From our dormitory window we gazed upon the beauties of Brookwood Cemetery, while on clear days we could even catch a glimpse of the spire of Woking Crematorium twinkling like a star against the dark background of Broadmoor Asylum. Those were merry days.

Later on at the Varsity I helped him to steer the college barge to victory over a measured furlong at Putney, and we were both sent down together from Oriel for emptying a bottle of Waw-waw Sauce into the slumber-wear of a popular dean.

I subsequently acted as honorary treasurer of the great Whisker Trust and Hair Combine of which Richardson was President,—having for its object the creation of a monopoly in what our chief humorously called “face fittings,”—instituted by a number of wealthy magnates who desired to confine the wear of Porterhouse moustaches to the cheeks of the few. How this Trust succeeded is a matter of common knowledge and need not be alluded to here.

I have only time to touch lightly upon the mental capacity of my friend. His humour, his incisive wit, his trenchant gift of satire, are notorious wherever flies the flag of an Empire famed for its humourists, its satirists, its wits. I could give countless instances of his nimble talent for repartee, but I will refrain. “Frank,” I would sometimes say to him, “Frank” (I often called him “Francis,” a joke which he always received with shouts of laughter), “Frank”—(he begged me to make use of his Christian name in the summer of 1874), “Frank”—(the same year, by the by, in which he gave me the freedom of his boot-cupboard), “Frank —.” Now I have forgotten what I was going to say.

No matter. I have said enough, I am sure, to give some idea of this fellow whose *facetiae* are always in the best of taste, whose instincts as an Empire-builder, anti-Zulu, and pro-Milo are never at fault. I have said enough to show the uncommon qualities of the man's character. In any case, I have said enough.

No. 2—PAUL A. RUBENS

IT was in the summer of 1896 that I first met Paul Rubens. Slim, brunette, with wide, childlike eyes of French grey, and yellow boots, he blew across my path with a suddenness that almost unhinged my reason and left me nothing further in life to regret. He was a much younger man in those days, in the very plenitude of his power, yet blessed with those modest deprecating ways which covered, though they could not conceal, the torch of genius that burned and blazed within his indomitable soul.

Little did I dream then (as I borrowed a few paltry coins of the realm in order to defray a trivial debt of honour that I had heedlessly incurred with a cabman) that the innocent hand from which I wrested the required amount with so much difficulty would one day live to write those haunting melodies without which no barrel-organ is complete, no gramophone tolerable—melodies which make the buried masters of harmony revolve in their graves from sheer envy, and inflict a pang of hopeless jealousy upon the sensitive spirit of the most generous of contemporaneous musicians.

As a composer my hero is unapproachable. He cannot be approached. Could Puccini have composed the music of *Miss Hook of Holland*? I doubt it. Is there anything in the whole of Wagner's works that can be compared to *The Sandoz Girl*? I trow not. As each fresh triumph crowns the lyre of England's greatest modern harmonist, his pitiful rivals hide their diminished heads. Elgar seizes the cantata that he has just committed, and consigns it to the flames; Sousa tears up his drum-parts in disgust.

The date of my first meeting with Paul Rubens is one not readily forgotten. It stands indelibly fixed upon the tablet of my memory, and for a number of reasons. For the moment I cannot remember any of them.

Christmas Eve, 1896! Shall I ever cease to recall that day with gratitude? It was the occasion, unless I am mistaken, of a display of amateur dramatic talent in the public hall of one of the largest commercial centres in the south of England. A *chef d'œuvre* by Pinero was the *pièce de résistance* (five out of the last ten words can be found in any standard French dictionary) of the evening, and Rubens had altruistically insisted upon undertaking the most prominent part in the play—that of the heroine's father, an elderly nobleman of choleric temperament. So realistic was the actor's make-up that he certainly did not look a day

younger than 145, a ripe age which is rarely met with nowadays, except upon the amateur stage.

Paul's appearance, indeed, was that of a man who has returned unexpectedly from the tomb to search for something he has left behind. So painfully anæmic and cadaverous did he look that an old lady in the audience, whose husband had recently perished from exposure in a second-class South-Eastern railway carriage, between Charing Cross and Cannon Street, fainted dead away on his first entrance, and declined to take any further interest in the performance until she had been publicly unlaced by a somewhat over-zealous amateur pew-opener.

In those days Rubens had a rich contralto voice of exquisite *timbre*, though his habit of singing contrapuntally (as musicians call it) militated against his success upon the concert platform. In 1902, however, at a delightfully informal *soirée* given at Cricklewood in aid of a Home for Inebriate Governesses in which Paul took a deep interest (the Home, of course, not the Inebriate Governesses), he dropped his voice while arguing confidentially with the under-butler upon the subject of corked champagne, and broke it irreparably. Since then his vocal efforts are reminiscent of the murmur of jays in immemorial elms and the cooing of innumerable swans, and the most pigeon-toed

performer upon the pianola can drown them without difficulty.

Paul Rubens is a rapid worker. I myself have seen him complete the scenario, libretto, score and lyrics of a musical comedy between breakfast and luncheon, and many of the most intricate and inspiring sextets (the Weaker Sex-tets he calls them) for which he is notorious have been composed upon the backs of menu-cards during that tedious period which elapses at dinner-parties when one is waiting for another bottle to be opened.

The soul of generosity, he will smoke the vilest cigar with a smile sooner than offend an acquaintance by declining to accept of his bounty. He combines the sterling qualities of sober citizen, devoted uncle, patient Master of Laphounds, firm friend, and scrupulous Parish Councillor, in a manner that evokes the admiration alike of Miss Pankhurst, Mr George Edwardes, and Father Vaughan.

As a motorist he is respected by every dog within the ten-miles radius, by every chicken without it. His hobbies—if a man whose every crowded hour of life is instinct with a sympathy that embraces the whole human race can be said to have hobbies—are chess and roller-skating, at both of which he excels. He collects coins, as indeed most of us do, and his signed portrait of Miss Corelli would fetch double its value in the American market to-morrow.

A master-mind indeed ! Yet how unspoilt ! I can never think of him without recalling that memorable passage from the famous poem of one of our greatest bards, in which he says, speaking of some man who did something, I forget what :—

“ Proud spirit who . . . ” (I do not remember the exact words, but it was something very fine about whatever the man had done.)

“ Whose . . . ” (There was a felicitous metaphor about an eagle or a lark or something.)

“ Shall England, Mother England . . . ” (Asking, so to speak, whether the Motherland would forget the services of her most gallant son.)

I am rather vague about it, but I remember the last sonorous line :—

“ Ah no, ah no, ah no, ah no ! . . . ” (This is not quite how it went, but near enough for all practical purposes.)

No. 3—C. B. FRY

THOUGH essentially of a modest and retiring disposition, I have suffered terribly in the past from being perpetually brought into close personal contact with the great men of my time. They seem to find a congenial atmosphere of restfulness, of repose, about my society which they fail to enjoy in the company of such of their intellectual peers as are on speaking terms with one another.

Publicity is extremely distasteful to me; notoriety I detest; fame affects me with active mental discomfort. Often and often, when some Cabinet minister or Mr Byles has invited me to share his hansom, have I shaken off the right hon. or hon. gentleman with a muttered execration, preferring a lonely drive to the so-called luxury of such dubious self-advertisement. I have even gone so far as to "cut" Mr Grayson in the Horseferry Road, and the offer of a seat in Lord Lonsdale's flaming yellow barouche would never lure me from the straw of my more sombre-coloured four-wheeler. But, as Miss Corelli very truly says, there is a destiny which shapes our ends, buff-hue

them how we may. And if my circle, like that of Sir Joshua, includes most of the master-minds of the century, it is not for me to protest. I am but the humble steel upon which these human flints strike out the flashes of genius which I am attempting to rekindle in these pages. I am the dark background against which these glow-worms shine out with redoubled effulgence.

Of all the great ones of the earth whose careers it has been my tedious task to follow from the cradle to the grave, none (in my opinion) has affected his generation more profoundly than Charles Burgess Fry. As a long-jumper his fame has spread to Calaveras County and caused consternation among the resilient frogs who populate the swamps of that distant transatlantic community. As a sportsman his name is respected wherever county gentlemen and squires foregather over the smoking-room fire to recount their bottles—I mean battles—over again, and count the pellets which thoughtless friends have seen fit to embed in their Harris tweeds.

I can never shoot a brace of hares, a leash of wild duck, a couple of coots, a wisp (to use the familiar technical terms) of woodcock, a flip of snipe, a yoke of bandicoots, or a piffle of wombats, without recalling that winter in the Himalayas when Charles Burgess Fry brought off a successful right-and-left at an elephant and a humming bird. He pulled the trigger very hard that time, did C. B. !

The very initials of my hero, which some thoughtful godfather appended to his surname at the font, were enough to ensure success in later days when he joined the ranks of those that are of riper years. To the mind of every woman they suggest a form of garment whose name wild cors—I mean horses—shall not drag from me, but which may be found in the early part of Vol. II. of "The Century Dictionary"; to the man in the street they convey a vivid word-picture of the editor of that world-famed magazine which is known in literary circles as "C.A.C." (Chiefly About Charles), without which no bookstall is a bookstall, no home can (in the proper sense of the word) be termed a home.

Why the great man ever embarked upon the thankless career of journalism is not known. True, Mr Pelham Warner was then editing *The Westminster Gazette*, while other evening papers were under the capable control of Messrs Jessop and Bosanquet, and the *Daily Mail* was being conducted by a syndicate of football specialists and cricket experts. But from the Queen's Club to Fleet Street is a long jump, even for Mr Fry.

My hero's personal appearance is too well known to require description. There is a light in his eye, a gleam of elation, such as might have been seen upon the features of Mr William Le Queux when the greatest novelist of our time was decorated by King Peter of Servia with the Order of Modesty

(Fifth Class) in commemoration of his services to the sacred cause of literature. There is a stability about his stance, as Mr Horace Hutchinson would express it, which even Mr Seymour Hicks might envy; there is a buoyancy about his gait which Mdle. Genée herself can hardly hope to emulate.

The one joy of my life is to feel that I have survived long enough to witness an age which can produce men of this stamp. My one regret must always be that I have never met this remarkable man face to face.

One has but to gaze for a short time with half-closed eyes (or through coloured glasses) at a photograph of my hero to realise the truth of all that I have said in my humble endeavour to do honour to one of the finest products of an age which may truly be called the noblest in the history of the world. Observe, I beg you, the serene expression in his face, the perfect fit of his collar, the placid air that lights his every feature, and thank Heaven that you are alive to hand so exquisite a tradition down to your grandchildren (or great-grandchildren, as the case may be). He stands alone. There may have been two Gracchi, two discoverers of the North Pole, two Gentlemen of Verona, two Siamese Twins, but there can be but one C. B. Fry. We have indeed much to be thankful for.

No. 4—ANDREW CARNEGIE

ANDREW CARNEGIE is perhaps the most brilliant example of unassisted self-manufacture that the world has ever produced. By his own colossal enterprise he has soared above his fellows ; he has risen on stepping-stones of their dead selves (as the poet felicitously remarks) to a pinnacle of opulence and distinction whose altitude constitutes a record in the annals of our time.

Plato fiddled while Rome was burning ; Carac-tacus held the bridge of the Tiber against all comers ; Damocles allowed a famished fox to gnaw his vitals, for no particular object except self-advertisement ; Lycander swam the Hellespont daily in order to keep an assignation he had made with Nero ; Balbus built a wall ; Romulus and Juliet were mothered by the she-wolf whose opportune cackling saved the Roman Capitol ; George Washington discovered America ; Max Beerbohm discovered Venice ; Mr William Gillett of the Bachelors' Club discovered Radium ; Father Vaughan discovered Society ; Mr Blatchford discovered Germany ; and so forth.

The heroes of every age—Napoleon, Ranjitsinhji, Milton, Socrates, Eugen Sandow, Tolstoy,

Herodotus, Alfred Austin, and Wilkie Bard—each and all did something to further the cause of civilisation, or to set their stamp upon every yard of the centuries which they adorned. But it has been left to Andrew Carnegie of Pittsburg, Pa., and Skibo, Suth., to impose a debt of gratitude upon the whole American-speaking world by demonstrating how sublimely a man may rise from small beginnings to the attainment of the loftiest ideals.

Every one who has paid a visit to Skibo Castle, whether in the capacity of honoured guest, as a friend of the butler, or by paying 1s. at the turnstile, must be struck by the magnificence of this palatial residence, standing in its own park-like grounds, within two miles of the railway station, with spacious bedrooms, plenteous offices, hot and cold water on every floor, electric light in the basement, and all the modern improvements and conveniences.

The sea used to come up to within a hundred yards of the dining-room window, until the lord of the manor objected, with an eloquence that King Canute might well have envied. Lobsters could be caught before breakfast on the lawn, until a policeman was stationed at the garden gate with strict orders only to admit bearers of pink tickets. Would that I had the time to pilot my readers from end to end of this remarkable domain! I would lead

them from the library (a free one, of course) through an early-Victorian boudoir to the state bedroom, which is tastefully decorated in a style known, I believe, as "late Pullman," and thence to the billiard-room. Thereafter, *via* the swimming bath (where guests are encouraged to emulate the methods of the nimble dabchick before dressing for dinner), we should find ourselves in the Great Hall, where a huge musical instrument, which combines the sonorous polyphony of the organ with the bicyclic properties of the pianola, renders conversation inaudible unless carried on with the aid of the megaphones thoughtfully provided by a kindly host.

There is, however, one room into which I cannot usher you. As at Glamis, Rufford, and the other haunted homes of England, there is a chamber at Skibo which none may enter. You may implore me to show you the smoking-room; I cannot do so. Threats, entreaties, all are useless. And for a very simple reason. There is no smoking-room. It does not exist. Visitors to Skibo Castle who wish to indulge in the harmless luxury of a pipe must join the gardener in the tool-shed, the coachman in the loose-box, or the odd man in the boot-hole, and commit their pardonable excesses in a clandestine fashion, far from the eye of their host.

Any guest whom the laird of Skibo discovers contaminating the atmosphere of the castle with

the fumes of tobacco is hounded to the station in a two-wheeled dogcart, without being given time to pack his tooth-brush—any personal effects which he may leave behind him in his flight being cast into the sea or put up to auction at the annual rummage sale for which Skibo is becoming famous.

Andrew Carnegie is a man of few prejudices. There is, however, one topic of conversation which is taboo at the Castle. As it is unsafe at Greeba or Lowther castles to discuss the respective merits of Miss Corelli or the Kaiser, so at Skibo it is positively dangerous to speak with any enthusiasm upon military matters. Carnegie is essentially a man of peace. His fortune is founded upon the manufacture of steel, in itself a peaceful industry unless perverted to base ends by such firms as Krupp or Vickers Maxim. He has no sympathy with the arts of Bellicosa, the Goddess of War.

Questions of international disagreement should, in his opinion, be settled in the cashier's office; subjects of diplomatic dissension should be left to the fell arbitrament of the dollar bill. Andrew will ever be the last man, as Shakespeare styles it, to "cry 'Haddocks!' and let slip the dogs of war!" Any reference to a soldier sends his temperature up at least two degrees, and he has publicly lamented the fact that many of Scotland's noblest and best have joined the ranks of the British Army instead of staying in Glasgow to celebrate the Sabbath

with both feet on the table in the old hieland fashion.

Carnegie is probably the most American man in England and the most English man in America. He is certainly the most Scottish in both. He has written a classic, entitled *The Gospel of Wealth*, in which he demonstrates the true happiness of poverty and exposes the misery of affluence, which grinds the faces of the rich and forces them to bear that intolerable burden of wealth, whose weight they so nobly decline to share with their more penurious fellow citizens. Mr Carnegie writes from his own personal experience. Once upon a time, I have heard tell, when he was very much younger than he is to-day, being hungry and at a distance from any place of public refreshment, he helped himself without invitation to the contents of a railway engineer's dinner-pail. Years after, when he had grown rich, he sent a cheque for £200 to the defrauded railway engineer as a memento of this incident. This, as the halfpenny papers observed at the time, was a noble act, and one that I appreciate better than most men. Once upon a time, a young lad in whom I was interested, being half-starved and without any visible means of support, helped himself without invitation to a leg of mutton which happened to belong to a butcher in Sloane Street. Years after, when he was caught, my friend received seven days hard labour

from an unfeeling magistrate as a reminder of the incident. "Learn to take things easily," said a great Roman philosopher. "Especially other people's things."

It is said, on I know not what authority, that it is the one desire of Mr Carnegie's life to sit in the House of Lords, in order that he may share with Lord Downshire the privilege of referring familiarly to Mr Edmund Gosse as "our librarian." Could human ambition soar higher? I doubt it.

No. 5—LITTLE TICH

THERE is something in the idea of a treasure of fabulous worth confined within the tiny circle of a single pearl that stirs the soul to its very depths ; there is something in the sight of a keen and jewelled dagger encased in an exiguous leather sheath that inspires the human mind to sublime and lofty thoughts. We do not value gems by the size of the casket that contains them ; the kernel of the monkey-nut is sweeter than the oleaginous marrow of the Brazil ; *crème de menthe* is as comforting to the palate when imbibed from the delicate contour of a liqueur glass as when inhaled noisily from a finger-bowl.

" Infinite tiches in a little room " is the text which I would like to hang over my hero's bed, if I could be quite certain of eluding the vigilance of the toy dachshund that is chained to the pillow. "*Multum in parvo*" has, of course, been from time immemorial the appropriate motto of the Leicestershire Tichs, who must not, however, be confounded with the Devonshire family of the same name, whose crest bears the well-known device, "*Tich Dien.*"

The mere use of the word, " Little," in connection

with the name of a public character implies that he has attained a measure of popularity which all must aspire to, if all cannot reach. The practice of attaching suitable epithets to contemporaneous heroes dates back to prehistoric ages and is sanctioned by antiquity. Thus do we hear of "*pious* Æneas," "*bluff* King Hal," "*judicious* Hooper," "*happy* Fanny Fields," "*cow-faced* Athene," "*lost* Sir Massingberd," "*jolly* Johnnie Danvers," "*good* Queen Bess," "*potted* Pélissier," "*dear old* Homer," "*frank* Richardson," etc. Thus, too, have we learnt to allude to any friend who is fortunate enough to be defunct as "*poor* So-and-So."

Even in early boyhood Tich was never what you might call a tall child. His development was entirely of a mental order. As a youth he was always a trifle under the average height, if anything; and in after years he decided to remain so. Seldom has he had cause to question the wisdom of this decision. True, I have occasionally seen him fumbling for a cab fare in the top of his boot, under the impression that his hand was in his trousers pocket, but this was one of the few disadvantages of physical brevity, and scarcely calls for serious comment.

There are, indeed, many compensations which fall to the lot of one who is short of stature. When taking off his hat to a lady, he does not have to reach up half so far as his more lengthy fellows;

if a sixpence is dropped on the carpet by a careless friend, he is certain to find it sooner than anyone else ; when he has mislaid his latch-key he can always enter the house *via* the slit in the letter-box ; diseases such as " smoker's throat " and " housemaid's knee," which assail other victims singly, can attack him in combination and affect only one portion of his anatomy, thereby enabling him to get over two illnesses in the time that other people devote to a recovery from but one.

The great men of the world have all been slight of stature. Napoleon, Lord Roberts, Mr Alfred Austin, Mr Mornington Cannon, Mr Hall Caine, Lord Roberts, Lord George Sanger, Mr Keir Hardie, Napoleon, Mr Cannon, Lord Roberts, Mr Hardie, Mr Caine, Napoleon, Lord Roberts—to name but a few—are (or were) small men, though some of them were (or are) smaller than others. Brevity is the soul of wit : the whitebait is a more succulent article of diet than the tarpon, though hardly as sustaining ; the whelk, when served *à l'épingle*, is more edible (if less nutritious) than the farmyard snail. So it is with Little Tich.

In the art of refined stagecraft Tich may not compare with Mr T. E. Dunville ; in the gift of subtle innuendo he may be surpassed by Mr George Graves ; in the felicity of unadulterated pre-Victorian repartee he may be excelled by the White-eyed Kaffir. But who shall rival his peerless

bonhomie, his sublime if somewhat elemental humour, the versatility of his facial play, his *répertoire* of incomparable badinage? I pause for a reply.

And then his dancing! Was ever kangaroo so sprightly, grasshopper so resilient, goat so graceful? When Tich doth dance I wish he might do nothing else. Every form of Terpsichorean art comes naturally to his nimble feet—from the merry rigadoun to the stately cellar-flap. This wee great master treads the minuet with the gait of a chamois or a Gibson girl; he gambols through the intricate figures of a mazurka with the elegance of a devoted gazelle. Nothing comes amiss to his twinkling feet, that, like the jocund day, stand tiptoe on the misty mountain tops.

No. 7—M. BLERIOT

THERE is a fashionable restaurant situated on the Eiffel Tower, in Paris, where one can obtain an excellent "high tea" for five francs, the altitude of both meal and price being appropriate to the locality. It was here, while indulging in the luxury of a French roll, several hundred feet above the level of the sea, that I first caught sight of M. Blériot, whose flying machines have been so very much in the air of late.

Rising to my feet (as is, indeed, my invariable practice in the presence of master-minds or social superiors) I stepped across the room, closely pursued by the genial head-waiter, who seemed to imagine that I had some intention of leaving the building without defraying my financial liabilities, and approached the table at which the Air King was silently partaking of a tepid collation.

This was evidently, as I realised, a moment to dispense with formal introductions. So, lightly beating my hero on the nape of the neck with the flat of my hand, in order to attract his attention, I seized a piece of toast from the dish at his side and returned to my seat bearing in my fingers the buttered booty, which, as I explained in transit,

I had no idea of keeping, but merely required as a pattern. Blériot followed close upon my heels, talking rapidly the while in a foreign tongue, such expressions as *espèce de veau*, *nom de chien*, *sacré chameau* occasionally impinging upon my sensitive ears and seeming to suggest that the great man was fond of dumb animals.

Even then, little as I knew him, there was something about M. Blériot that struck me particularly. At the time I thought it was his fist; later on I was induced to modify my opinion, a careful cuticular examination proving that the Monarch of the Skies (who was, as sailors say, exceptionally handy with his feet) must have been wearing shooting-boots on the occasion of our first interview. It was very characteristic of the Prince of Aeroplanes that he should fly so easily into a rage. I believe, however, that his powers of volitation were developed at a much earlier period, and that in childhood it was his frequent custom to fly across the nursery into his mother's arms. He was, indeed, always fond of taking the air, though, like the President of the United States, he did not, of course, take it all, and would never fly in the face of either Providence or facts. (I could go on like this for pages, but forbear.)

I might easily style myself one of M. Blériot's most intimate friends. I might recall many pleasant hours spent with my feet upon the mantelpiece of

his balloon garage, a syphon of petrol at my elbow, helping the master-mind to build castles in the air. I might even adduce conclusive and circumstantial evidence to prove that many of the technicalities in connection with inventions, attributed to M. Blériot, which tend towards a solution of the problem of aerial flight, were suggested by myself as I sat upon the dissecting-table in his comfortable laboratory, of which I always possessed the latch-key. Modesty, as Mr Shaw would say, forbids. Also I am obsessed by a hereditary aversion to the practice of any gross economy of fact. I am, indeed, a kind of George Washington. I am—but never mind.

In a lengthy and thoughtful paper which I sent to *The Times* a few weeks ago, which I regret to say they declined to print—the loss is the nation's more than my own—I proved, by a series of pertinent and irresistibly humorous diagrams, that the mastery of the air lies within the reach of any scientist who can construct a flying-machine which shall be lighter than ether and at once combine the stability and comfort of the motor-'bus, the celerity of the seagull, and the sobriety of the submarine. That M. Blériot shares these views I have no doubt whatever, though he has not actually told me so to my face. In my verbal communications with persons of his nationality I am severely handicapped by a habit I have acquired of speaking

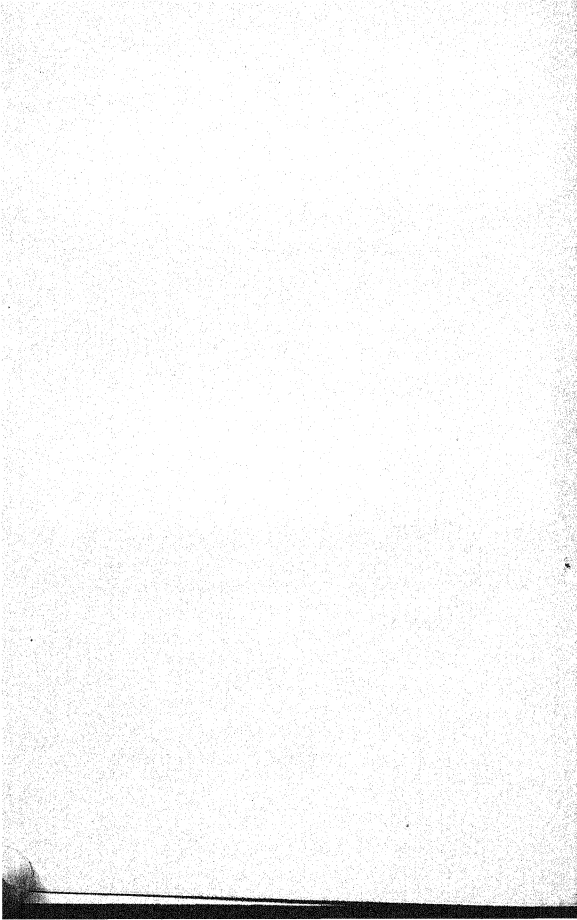
French with a strong Scottish accent, but any conversation I have ever had with the Emperor of the Atmosphere (who talks French, be it said, like a native) has proved the orthodoxy of my views upon aerostatics—whatever they may be.

Of the personal appearance of this remarkable man I will say nothing. He is, indeed, not easy to describe. If you can imagine a lady-like edition of Mr Bart Kennedy, an etherealised Mr Chesterton, or Mr Max Beerbohm, disguised as a Labour member, practising the “ nice conduct of a clouded hod,” you will still have no idea of the figure of my hero. If he were to allow his hair to grow he would not resemble Mr Le Gallienne, the great American humourist, nor does his inimitable French accent, his unrivalled mastery of Parisian *patois*, recall the extemporaneous “ gags ” of our premier dramatic swashtrooper and mossbuckler, Mr Lewis Waller.

I will not waste my valuable time in commenting upon his habits, his gait, his port (I refer, of course, to his bearing, not his beverage), his hobbies, his tastes. It would be unfair to expect a man of so ethereal a temperament, who dwells so largely in the clouds, to hold other than airy views upon many subjects of merely mundane or material importance. To tell the truth—always a refreshing thing to do, by the by—to tell the truth—but this is neither the time nor the place for such luxuries.

III

THE STATELY HOMES OF
ENGLAND



No. 1—"THE HOLLIES," MUGLEY-ON- THE-TITCH

THE SEAT OF ALFRED WILCOX, ESQ.

ON the outskirts of Mugley proper, and within three miles of Wingleton (which, by the by, is pronounced Witton) and Bellinger (pronounced Bingley), stands a most attractive creeper-clad family residence, situated in magnificently wooded and park-like grounds of some two-and-a-half acres, and containing three spacious reception-rooms, nine bedrooms, a conservatory, coach-house, mushroom-shed, vinery, and bicycle-garage, as well as an ample box-room which is the envy of all the housewives (pronounced hussivs) of the neighbourhood, from Mumbleminster (pronounced Mumpster) to Llangwthstrwl (not pronounced at all).

On either side of the well-timbered carriage-drive two laurel bushes, seven magnolias, and a giant araucarusia or "monkey puzzle" (which some authorities term "puzzle monkey" and others decline to mention), rear their heads above the velvet croquet-lawn. While in the wild garden, dotted here and there with rustic arbours and still more rustic tool-sheds, a tropical luxuriance of purple

stinkwort, thistles, pimpernel, and "old-man's beard" provides a glossy carpet for the jaded feet of the owner of "The Hollies."

The front door is of a delicate puce colour, luminous and rich in tone, save in spots where too impatient telegraph messengers have endeavoured to accelerate admittance by kicking the paint off the lower panels. On either side of the porch is a bell-handle, the one labelled "visitors," the other "servants," while a notice to the effect that the tradesman's entrance is round the corner, and a small earthenware drinking-trough marked "For dogs only," combine to keep the doorway comparatively select, and divert the unwelcome attentions of the butcher and the habitual inebriate to other and more appropriate channels.

Upon the door itself hangs an old-fashioned knocker which would suggest a Della Robbia plaque of exquisite workmanship did it not so closely resemble a mutton-bone. A smart tattoo upon this instrument, followed by a brief interview of a financial character with the family parlourmaid, admits the stranger to the front hall, where the chief object of interest is an artistic linoleum mat bearing upon its face—if a mat can have a face, which I doubt—the homely word, "Salve," printed in three distinct and different colours.

Tripping heavily over this charming obstacle, the visitor is at once ushered headlong into the

boudoir, a room that is sacred to the lady of the house. Here Mrs Wilcox's well-known taste in furniture finds admirable expression in the various decorative effects which assist in making this chamber worthy of the peerless matron whose ample charms it but barely succeeds in containing.

If this be your lucky day—and it must be, or you would not have gained admission to the precincts of "The Hollies"—you will probably find the mistress of the house seated upon a "cosy-corner," close to the fireplace, inscribing the word "Alf" in indelible marking ink upon some of her lord's more intimate garments. After explaining your errand (if you have one), you will be permitted to sit on a music-stool in a thorough draught by the window and answer any questions that your hostess may be inspired to put to you.

On the occasion of my first visit to "The Hollies," I was completely overcome by the condescension of Mrs Wilcox. Not content with making a series of searching inquiries as to my means, the sex of my children, my mode of livelihood (for which she was good enough to express the profoundest pity), my religious views (with which she disagreed), my habits (of which she strongly disapproved), and the address of my hosier (of whom she had never even heard), she actually took the trouble to rise and ring the bell, and when a grey-haired retainer (the gardener, I think) appeared upon the scene,

begged him to see me safely past the umbrella-stand, and so out into the snow.

Before leaving, however, I observed many evidences of Mrs Wilcox's thoughtfulness and taste. I was immensely struck by the pink woollen mats (designed to protect the Sheraton tables from the bases of the flower-pots) with which the room was so liberally studded. I noticed with delight the reversible antimacassars (with waterproof linings) that adorned the various high-backed chairs. I admired the small Japanese fans nailed on the central wall of the room above the daguerreotype of my hostess's maternal grandfather. I jealously noted the cards of invitation to a mayoral banquet and two local bazaars, as well as the letter of regret from Eliza, Countess of Blitheringvernon and Waddyminster (pronounced Bungling and Wopster), which were so carefully fixed into the edge of the looking-glass over the mantelpiece. The crystal chandelier in a glass case on the piano affected me profoundly ; the hand-painted tambourine that did duty for waste-paper basket moved me almost to tears. There was a china parrot on a perch in the window which struck me as wonderfully life-like, while a stuffed squirrel under a glass cover, immortalized in the act of cracking a filbert, made a very real and lasting impression upon me.

I had no opportunity of exploring the remainder of the house, but I gathered from the parlourmaid

that the general scheme of decoration in the other rooms was similar to that which had struck me so favourably in the boudoir. There were none of those deplorably florid Louis XV. ceilings ; there was none of that gloomy Elizabethan oak panelling which one sees in some of the homes of even our oldest families. Everything at " The Hollies " was delightfully new. Mrs Wilcox has indeed furnished her home in a style which is, I believe, known as *nouvel art*—of which it has been said that there is more *nouvel* than *art* about it—and the result is amazingly successful and quite unlike anything else in the world. High praise, you say ? But none the less well deserved. I take off my hat to Mrs Wilcox !

No. 2—"THE HALL," ATTENBORO', KENT

THE SEAT OF SIR ISIDOR HODGKINSON, M.P.

PASSENGERS on the South-Eastern Railway who, owing to the deplorable practice of placing implicit reliance on the *obiter dicta* of a last year's "Bradshaw," have the good fortune to be detained for three hours at Attenboro' Station, on a quiet Sunday afternoon in Lent, and have satisfied their natural curiosity for antiquities by inspecting such objects of rare archæological interest as are provided in the local refreshment-room, cannot pass the time more profitably than by taking a short walk through the sleep-scented pergolas of hops which adorn and beautify the garden of England and help to reduce the mind of the Kentish rustic to its normal condition of chronic coma.

By momentarily diverting the attention of the ticket-collector to an imaginary dog on the line, it is possible for the agile passenger to elude the notice of that vigilant official and leave the station unobserved, when a few minutes' sharp running will bring him to the lodge-gates of one of the most

superb monuments of modern architectural skill to be found within a radius of fifty miles of the Metropolis.

I refer, of course, to "The Hall," Attenboro', that famous provincial palace which has been the seat (and in a sense the home) of the Hodgkinson family for close upon one generation, and is at present the residence of Sir Isidor Hodgkinson, head of the clan that bears his name, and Member of Parliament for one of London's most populous divisions.

Attenboro' Hall is, indeed, a perfectly appointed mansion, in faultless order and admirable repair, surrounded by woodland and wilderness parks, with eminently desirable natural, social, and sporting environments, modern sanitation, acetylene gas, and plaster ceilings.

Its vast grounds comprise a noble paddock, shaded by prolific crab-apple trees, a bothy, rookery, moat (with coarse fishing), golf-links (with coarser language), as well as a dower-house capable of providing accommodation for from four to six parents.

As a mere edifice "The Hall" is a wonderfully imposing structure. It is a fine example of various styles of architecture, for while the billiard-room is essentially Gothic, there is a window in the best spare bedroom which is distinctly Tudor, if it is anything at all, which I sometimes wonder. Had

Sir Christopher Wren been commissioned to build a bungalow for Queen Elizabeth at Clacton-on-Sea, one can imagine that his genius might have evolved a design which should in some way resemble the ground plan of " The Hall." Unfortunately, her Majesty was never inspired to give the great architect an opportunity of anticipating the handiwork of Messrs Muggridge & Bloxam, who are responsible for the erection of Attenboro' Hall (as well as that of the local Home for the Half-Witted).

But if the house is in itself remarkable, it is no less remarkable as being the casket that worthily contains so priceless a jewel as the pure white soul of its owner. It is not my desire (nor, indeed, does it lie within the scope of such an article as this) to describe the individuality and person of the proprietor of this famous mansion. Suffice it to say that Sir Isidor Hodgkinson has the noblest character and the best claret of any man I know, and that in appearance he resembles a very genial and benevolent vulture that has been suddenly afflicted with acute elephantiasis. His habit of carrying on conversation almost exclusively with his hands, assisted by a slight but noticeable nasal lisp, has been acquired by constant intercourse with the numerous alien immigrants who form the majority of his East-end constituents, and his invariable practice of wearing diamond rings outside his gloves, in con-

junction with a sumptuous fur waist-coat, is a weakness pardonable in one of his age and attainments. Sir Isidor is a Briton to the core, a Tory to the finger-tips, an Imperialist from the waist up, and it is such men as he who have made—nay, make—yea, are making—the history of our Empire to-day! (*Loud and prolonged cheers.*)

To return to "The Hall." The library is perhaps the most magnificent, as well as the most comfortable, room in the house. A small oil stove, kept constantly burning day and night in one corner of the apartment, adds a cheerful, opulent air to the surrounding furniture, and helps to light up the oil paintings on the walls and the oilcloth on the floor. Every book that the heart of man can desire is to be found on the crowded rows of congested shelves that line the dado. Here, in an elegant fumed and polished oak bookcase, stand the volumes of "The Century Dictionary," for which Sir Isidor is still paying his monthly instalments of 2s. 6d. Here, too, is *The Times' "Encyclopedia,"* in which the earnest student may read of the discovery of America or, in fact, of any historical event that has occurred not less than a century ago.

A brief glance at the "visitors' book" will show one the popularity of this country house as a week-end resort for Father Vaughan and the Smart Set. Among the signatures of guests one

may observe such well-known and respected names as those of Lord Pickford, Sir Carter and Lady Paterson, Baron Niersteiner, Lady Day and the Hon. Miss Martin, Sir Lea and Lady Perrin, Graf Hunyadi von Janos, Sir Debenham and Lady Freebody, Count Carreras, and the Baroness Toussaud. "The Hall" is, indeed, a typical Englishman's Home, and well repays a visit.

No. 3—"STAGGERHOLME," SURREY

THE SEAT OF MAJOR J. BLOOD-BUSTERFIELD, J.P.

IT has been truly said on more than one occasion that an Englishman's castle (whether it be "Greeba" or "The Elephant And") is his home, nor is there any race of men at present extant upon the surface of the civilised globe in whose breasts there burns a livelier respect for the sanctity of the human hearth than that which inspires the bosoms of the great people to which it is our enviable privilege to belong. Of all the domestic fortresses which stand four square to every wind that blows across the rugged snipe-marshes of our island home, there is none that exemplifies the English characteristic of aggressive solitude in a more typical manner than does the country seat of Major Blood-Busterfield, late of his Majesty's Loyal Company of Bombay Mounted Submarines.

It was not for nothing that the gallant Major sacrificed his few remaining auburn hairs upon the altar of patriotism which our Empire-builders have erected in every tropical climate of the world. It was not for nothing that he left his liver in the

Far East. It was not for nothing that he returned home, after twenty-seven years' service in India, trailing clouds of creditors in his wake, with one leg shorter than the other, a vocabulary that is the envy of every admiral who subscribes to *The Times* Book Club, and a taste for curry and mineral waters which has no equal in Great Britain to-day.

Major Blood-Busterfield is a soldier of whom England may indeed be justly proud. He has contrived to stamp the *imprimatur* of his unique personality upon that residence near Hounslow where he dispenses a brusque but eminently British hospitality to all those whom he honours with an invitation to crack a bottle of Tabasco sauce with him or to plumb the depths of his rare cellar of unrivalled Californian wines.

" Staggerholme " is approached by way of a broad and stately carriage-drive, which sweeps up to the front porch for a distance of nearly 32 yards. It is embellished here and there by picturesque notice boards from which the trespasser may learn that he will be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law, while the timid tradesman notes that he will do well to beware of the dog. A small card bearing the legend " No bottles " (in Roman characters) adds a final touch of austerity to the area railings, while the statement engraved upon the front door requesting that the bell may not

be rung unless an answer is required gives pause to the stranger who sets foot for the first time upon the threshold of Major Blood-Busterfield's country residence.

Though a frequent guest at "Staggerholme," I can say but little of the architecture of the house itself, as I have never been quite sure whether the style belongs more to the Renaissance than to the Rococo period. But I am certain that the Doric pillars which adorn the doorway are, if anything, less Byzantine than Romanesque, and more Liberty than either, and that what I once took for a particularly alarming gargyle near the roof was merely the head of my host, who was busily employed addressing a few winged words from an attic window to his soldier-servant in the basement below.

The furniture throughout the house is obviously the product of that particular period of Georgian decorative art of which Ruskin raves so ecstatically, tempered here and there by a slight dash of early German-Lloyd. The bookshelves are filled with choice military treatises of a purely technical character, such as "Tactics Made Easy," "Seventy Ways of Cooking Curry" (by the author of "The Sins of Satiety"), "The Rudiments of Retiring," "Field Kitchens: their Use and Abuse," "Recent Changes in Army Clothing Regulations" (twelve volumes octavo), as well as the works of Captain

Robert Marshall, Lieut.-Colonel Newnham-Davis, Colonel Kipling, Captain Kendal, Major W. Le Queux, Major-General Blatchford, and other well-known experts.

Of all the many interesting rooms in this interesting house the most interesting is undoubtedly the library. Here the lord of " Staggerholme " has inaugurated a unique museum of curiosities where guests may profitably spend many an idle hour which might otherwise be wasted with Mrs Blood-Busterfield at the bridge-table or with the eldest of the seven unmarried Misses Blood-Busterfield in the conservatory.

Objects of historical value or sentimental interest, acquired by the gallant Major or his intrepid forebears at the cost of infinite blood and treasure, are ranged in glass cupboards round the four walls of the room, and form a goodly show. The intelligent observer may note here such articles as Sir Francis Drake's snuff-box, the contents of which the famous admiral administered so effectively to the Spanish Armada ; the identical stalking-cap in which Mr Keir Hardie galloped his first stag ; the half-sheet of notepaper upon which Mr Arthur Balfour finally made up his mind ; a bottle of *vin ordinaire* which accompanied Mr Hilaire Belloc upon all his continental travels ; the hoof of Marengo (this being the forty-second known foot of this remarkable equine

centipede); the apple which descended upon the head of Sir Isaac Newton when he discovered the gravity of force; a policeman's battered helmet, picked up in Palace Yard and still transfixed by a fine set of expensive false teeth, once the property of a militant Suffragette; and, lastly, the royal patent conferring the dignity of knighthood upon Sir Horatio Ikestein (first cousin by marriage to Major Blood-Busterfield) in recognition of his services to the Empire during the South African War, when he nobly sold canned provisions to the military authorities (*per* Major B. B.) at little more than double cost price, and subsequently bought them back again at rather less than half their face value.

I have not space to do more than touch upon the weird beauty of those endless rows of stuffed salmon with basilisk eyes in the smoking-room, of that moulting bear that does duty for hat-rack in the front hall, of the elephant's feet that make such excellent waste-paper baskets in the drawing-room, nor indeed of the many *objets d'art* which congest the reception-rooms, and, in the form of semi-preserved mementoes of the Major's prowess in the realm of sport, pay so immortal a compliment to my host's unerring marksmanship in all quarters of the world.

But I cannot leave "Staggerholme" without saying a few words upon the subject of the Italian

cabbage garden which occupies so prominent a position in the foreground of the surrounding landscape. This ornamental plot was laid out last year by Major Blood-Busterfield himself, assisted by a company of time-expired army reservists (to whom he used to refer with incomparable wit as " the orchid squad "), and resembles in theory and design that still more famous example of horticultural skill, about which American tourists write home so enthusiastically, which is to be seen at its best at " Chutney Lodge," the country seat of Lady Elizabeth Lazenby in Kent. Cabbages of every shade and variety grow in glorious profusion right up to the windows on the south side of the house, while the flaming beds of yellow mustard which brighten the verbaceous borders are only equalled by those of old Lord Keen at Colman Park, Hants (or Hamps, I forget which). Major Blood-Busterfield's cabbage-garden is, indeed, the most picturesque cabbage-garden I have ever seen. Persons who appreciate cabbage-gardens are quite certain to appreciate this cabbage-garden. Need I say more ?

No. 4—"THE BREAKERS," WOZZLETON-
ON-THE-SEA

THE SEAT OF COLONEL CYRUS P. VIPONT

I NEVER think of my esteemed and trusted friend, C. P. Vipont, without recalling those stirring words on the subject of America written by one who is universally recognised as being probably the noblest bard that the world of letters is ever likely to produce.

"This," says the poet (referring to the United States),

"This is the Country of the Free,
The Cocktail and the Ten-cent Chew,
Where you're as good a man as me,
And I'm a better man than you.
O Liberty, how Free we make !
Freedom; what liberties we take !"

And yet, strange as it may seem, Colonel Vipont has deserted the home of freedom, the haven of republicanism, the nursery of democracy, and, like many another Trans-Atlantic millionaire, has settled down to spend his colossal fortune in this England of ours, whose patriotic inhabitants will always hold out welcoming "hands across the sea" to

all whose balance at the bank is as assured as that of a financial Blondin.

Time was when I invariably spent my winter holiday (the "fall vaycaytion" he called it) with Cy. P. at his seaside palace near Hastings, while my own modest villa, on the slippery and unfashionable side of Denmark Hill, was in the hands of plumbers or bailiffs.

If I may be allowed to commit a pardonable witticism, I annually deserted the Brokers for "The Breakers" (*loud laughter which was instantly suppressed*), where I was always received with that combination of cordiality and cocktails which has long given our American cousins a name for unrivalled hospitality.

I made Cy.'s acquaintance many years ago when I was travelling in Omaha as the representative of a well-known firm of Deptford habermongers, with a new line in celluloid slumber-wear at 2s. 11d. per pair. He was then selling chewing-gum and "red-hot" peanuts on the parlour cars of the O. and P. Y. Railroad, and laying the foundations of that fortune which has at length enabled him to take his proper place in London society and gain access to the smartest boudoirs in Belgravia and to the Royal Enclosure at Ascot.

To make a short story long, I was "best man" to Cy. P. when he married Aspasia, the daughter of his employer, Hasdrubal K. Platt, the Chewing-

Gum King of Plattsville (Mo), and also acted as usher at the christening of his firstborn—an occasion which I celebrated by making the font re-echo with Sullivan's felicitous setting of "O Ush thee, my Baby."

Years afterwards, when Cyrus emigrated to England and purchased a town house in the most fashionable part of Crouch End, where his freak dinner parties were the talk of all London and most of Maida Vale, I suggested to him the advisability of buying a country seat where he could entertain (and thereby retain) his increasing circle of friends. He was rapidly gaining a *locus standi* in society, and it was due to my initiative and encouragement that he has now acquired a *locus sedendi* as well.

"The Breakers" was an ordinary seaside stucco maisonette, more of a shrimping-box than a family residence, when Cy. P. bought it from the widow of a retired corndealer. By the time he had added three new wings, an Elizabethan courtyard, an annexe, swimming bath, bicycle track, Gothic porch, moat and drawbridge, welkin, dome, clock-tower, a dozen and a half gables, a few gargoyles, three bastions, a plinth or two, some mullions, and an architrave, the corndealer himself would never have recognised it. (I personally voted against the addition of the dome, but Cy. was adamant on the subject. Although I explained that it would only fatigue his guests to be taken

up to see the sunsets, he finally persuaded me by an apt quotation from the repertoire of Madame Patti. "Be you never so nimble," he said, "there's no place like Dome.")

Cy. P. filled the drawing-room with priceless pictures—acting on the principle that one good Turner deserves another; transported the Pompadour's bedroom from the Tuileries to "The Breakers"; conveyed the original wall built by Balbus from Rome to Wozzleton-on-the-Sea; and gutted seventeen Florentine villas, twenty-five Elizabethan cottages in Surrey, and a temple in Samarkand, in order to furnish the sumptuous reception-rooms.

There is a telephone in every single room at "The Breakers," while, out of deference to our national prejudices, and as a token of the respect with which every true-born American regards William the Conqueror, the Colonel has arranged that his 'phone number shall be "One-oh-double-six Hastings."

The result of Cy.'s labours has been to convert what was once a modest, unpretentious mansion into a sort of cross between the Flat-Iron Building (N.Y.) and the Taj (Ag.), while the interior of this remarkable palace resembles nothing so much as the saloon of a P. and O. steamer relieved by a slight *soupeçon* of Turkish mosque.

"Say, Cy.," I exclaimed to my host on one

occasion, as I gazed at the palatial contours of this magnificent building, "It's a cinch every time. The limit! Hully gee! but it's mighty fine."

"How?" asked Cy. P. ("How?" is the Chicagese for "What?")

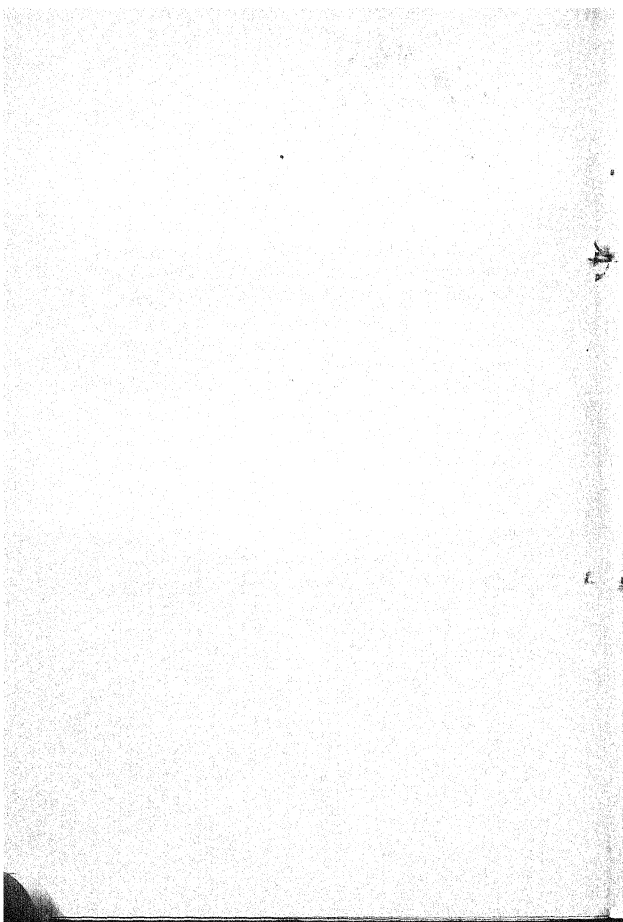
"Way up in G!" I replied.

The Colonel merely raised his eyebrows some, and called loudly for iced water.



IV

DANGEROUS TRADES



No. 1—CHEESE-PUNCHING

IT is an old but none the less true saying that one half of the world does not know how the other half lives. Rabelais was the first person to make this profound remark, and it has been frequently repeated by far less brilliant but equally worthy individuals since the spacious times of that broad-minded philosopher. There is many a man to-day who does not even know how his better-half lives, though he only confides his suspicions to the trained ears of the family solicitor, who shakes his head obscurely and adds another item to his client's bill of costs. This, however, is beside the point.

In these modern days when the labour market is overcrowded with workers, who are all seeking some form of employment which shall combine the least possible expenditure of physical energy with the highest possible salary, men (and even women) are forced to adopt many curious professions in order to earn a precarious livelihood.

In this brief series of thoughtful papers I propose to deal exclusively with those particular trades in which the workman is exposed to grave risks

either of life or limb. Thus I hope that my readers may be led to reflect with gratitude upon that supreme good fortune which enables them to sit serenely upon the safe if somewhat giddy heights of office stools or behind the grill of some provincial bank, making laborious double-entries in bulky leather volumes or prying into the secrets of their patrons' pass-books. Theirs is indeed a sheltered existence compared with that of the man who takes his life in his hand daily in the discharge of his duties. And since it is always a beneficial if not an entirely pleasant experience to contemplate the fortunes of the less-privileged classes, I propose to describe in as few words as possible some of those professions in which many of our fellow-countrymen are at present perilously engaged, but of which we see and hear so little that we are in danger of becoming callous to the suffering entailed.

In the course of these articles I shall purposely refrain from touching upon those trades whose perils are too well-known to require mention. I shall not refer to that unfortunate class of human being whose doubtful privilege it is to hunt the Norfolk Roads for plovers' eggs, in order that Colonial Premiers may be fittingly entertained and the ties between the Colonies and the Mother-country still further strengthened. I shall not say a word about the humble fishermen who put out

to sea in an open boat in the teeth of the gale, and return home laden with caviare wrested from some reluctant sturgeon and destined to enrich those banquets upon which are based the very foundations of municipal government. The danger to which these men are exposed is too obvious to need description. I will not dwell upon the sufferings of their wives as they sit at some lonely cottage window listening to the hoarse cry of the peewit or the clang of the lifeboat-bell, wondering whether their brave, devoted husbands have had the sense to change their damp socks, or whether their intrepid sons have perchance themselves become bait for the voracious sardines which infest the North Sea.

It is not only in what are called the lower walks of life that danger is to be encountered. Many an eminent surgeon is striding along through the busy streets of the metropolis to-day, looking more like a conjurer than a man, with a set smile on his thin lips, a stethoscope inside his hat, and in his heart the knowledge that he has at last discovered some new and possibly fatal disease which would never have become epidemic but for his untiring investigations. He has perhaps just left the bedside of a wealthy and confiding patient, the more vital of whose internal organs he has insisted on removing. He can still hear the groans of a dyspeptic major-general who has one gouty foot in the grave and

is having the cemetery enlarged to accommodate the other. But I digress.

Most of us at some period or other of our daily lives are in the habit of consuming a certain quantity of cheese. Some prefer the Rimmel-like qualities of Camembert ; others, gifted with a less lively imagination, can grapple gaily with the homely Gorgonzola. For these I have no message. They are blessed with olfactory organs less sensitive than their fellows ; they can look after themselves. But to those of you who eat Gruyère cheese, heedlessly perhaps, unconscious of the suffering you are inflicting upon a small but by no means unimportant section of the community, I would appeal urgently, insistently, and not I hope in vain.

Have you ever noticed the numerous holes with which Gruyère cheeses are punctured ? Have you ever paused to consider or reflect upon the reason for these frequent perforations or the method of their manufacture ? I trow not. Yet, my friends, " nothing walks with aimless feet " ; there is a good and sufficient reason for everything in this world, if we can only discover it. So it is with the apertures in Gruyère. They are not meaningless punctures designed to give an air of candour, of openness, to an otherwise commonplace article of diet. They are full of purpose, and the chief object of these holes is naturally to let the odour of the cheese escape, to provide an outlet for a

perfume which, if constrained, might become too pungent for family use.

The Gruyère cheese as it comes direct from the cheese-mill is a perfect thing, flawless, without holes. But for the sake of the public health (and in accordance with Article XII. of the Explosives Act), it cannot long be allowed to remain in a condition which, though attractive from an artistic point of view, would shortly render it a menace to the national safety and a grave danger to cheese-eaters.

At all respectable cheese manufactories in these islands there is a class of labourer, technically known as a "cheese-puncher," employed at the ridiculous wage of 14s. a week, whose duty it is to effect the necessary outlets for the latent and suppressed energy of Gruyère cheeses. This work, as can well be imagined, is a dangerous one, and requires no little dexterity and courage. True, the men are supplied with *pince-nez*, respirators, and wicket-keeping gloves, but, as is always the case, habit soon makes them careless, and serious accidents are constantly occurring, which, under the new Employers' Liability Act, are matters of grave concern and expense to the manufacturers.

If you have ever tried to open a bottle of soda water in the train with the blade of a small pocket-knife, you will realize the feelings of a cheese-puncher every time he drives his gimlet into the

heart of a virgin cheese. If you have ever inadvertently pressed the knob of an over-loaded syphon and had to hasten upstairs in a half-drowned condition to change your boots, you will understand something of the hourly discomfort which attends the profession of cheese-punching.

If you can imagine the effluvium of the Strand on a hot summer afternoon, multiplied by the odour of the sloth-house at the Zoo, with just a dash of the Thames at low tide and a slight *soupeçon* of old-aged egg, you can form some idea of the atmosphere in which these wretched "cheese-punchers" live and move and have their being. Small wonder, then, that few of them survive the age of eighty, that their noses assume a chronic distortion heavenwards, that they are apt to faint at the scent of the meanest primrose at the river's brim, and that their obituary notices contain the single request, "No flowers."

Such things must be, I suppose. But it is as well that the public should have its eyes opened to one of the most crying scandals of modern times. How long (I ask myself), how long is the flower of our English manhood to be compelled to pass its days handling these perilous bombs which are eventually destined to adorn the dinner-tables of our aristocracy? How long are we to remain insensible to the suffering which is the daily lot of these devoted individuals who puncture the cheese

upon which we fatten and grow proud? How long are we going to tolerate the apathy of the present Government upon a question of domestic legislation which threatens to become one of the most notorious scandals of the twentieth century?

"Men must eat and women must sleep," and the sooner it's over, as Tennyson says, the sooner it's done. But that is no excuse for the callous attitude adopted by the whole population towards a dangerous profession which threatens to rob our first-born of their sense of smell, our second-born of their self-respect, and our third-born of their sense of humour. How long (I ask myself) is this state of things to continue? I pause for a reply.

No. 2—BOTTLE-AGING

GOOD wine needs no bush ; all it needs, indeed, is drinking. But good wine is not always easy to obtain. One cannot send a messenger-boy round to the nearest grocer with a postal order for 3s. 6d. and a curt note requesting the immediate delivery per bearer of "one bottle of good wine." Like friendship and slippers, wine requires the mellowing influence of time ere it can reach that state of perfection which inspires the connoisseur to gargle with it for a few moments, in a very attractive and musical fashion, before allowing it to seek its destined haven in his very vitals. One swallow does not make a summer, but a course of persistent and intelligent swallows will often turn the winter of our discontent into a good imitation of that spring which is eternal in the human breast and only awaits the stimulus of a little alcoholic encouragement to express itself.

The folly of putting old wine into new bottles has become proverbial, and as a general practice has long been discontinued ; but the habit of placing new wine into old bottles still prevails and, indeed, threatens to become more common every day.

Those of us who belong to old-fashioned clubs where we can dine in perfect silence in a semi-darkened room, our wants ministered to by pre-historic waiters with side-whiskers, who lay the varied viands before us with a reverence which suggests the performance of some sacred old-world ceremonial, are safe in ordering the oldest wine that the cellar can produce. But we do not all belong to fashionable clubs. Some of us have been blackballed for the Turf or the Garrick on account of our connection with the racecourse or the stage. Others have been ejected from the Athenæum for using unepiscopal language to the steward. Some again have been removed shrieking from the Devonshire for making a heart declaration with only three cards of that particular suit in our own hand, and evincing surprise when our partner proceeded to lay down the ace, queen, ten, and five other small hearts upon the table. Others have been turned out of the Kennel Club for barking at the hall-porter, and so on.

We are consequently compelled to take our meals wherever we can, either at a ham-and-beef emporium in St Martin's Lane where you can obtain a cut off the joint and two vegetables for 4d., or at some more polite restaurant in Soho where a dinner of eight courses (including *hors d'œuvres* at the beginning and a banana and three monkey-nuts

at the end) is served on cold plates for the modest sum of 2s. 6d.

The problem of ordering wine on such occasions is always a difficult one. If you are weak enough to ask the wine-waiter for his candid opinion on the subject he will always advise the selection of a peculiar brand of champagne called *Veuve Laframboise*, of which nobody has ever heard, but in which he, being a connection by marriage of the widow lady who manufactures this particular decoction, takes a more than usually intelligent interest. I do not propose to discuss the relative merits of various champagnes, for a lecture upon this expensive beverage would have little bearing upon my subject. I intend only to look upon the wine when it is red—as, for instance, claret, burgundy, beaune, raspberry-vinegar, etc., for it is in the perfection of such vintages as these that the passage of years plays so prominent a part. What's bred in the beaune—but no!

Looking carefully down the wine list of the restaurant, you will observe an item which is conspicuous by being underlined in red ink, thus: "Chateau Bonnefemme . . . (very nutty) . . . 1824. 5s. 6d. per bot.; 4s. per $\frac{1}{2}$ -bot." If you are giving a dinner to your fiancée or to a select circle of City magnates, you will probably run to a whole bot. and hang the expense. If you are merely dining with what I believe is technically

known as "the wife," a half bot. will be sufficient.

You proceed, therefore, to order it with as lordly an air as you can, sit back in your chair and commence eating olives, being careful to throw the stones underneath the table or into the flowerpot with which the board is adorned, which contains an artificial chrysanthemum or a couple of real live daffodils.

We will now follow the wine-waiter to the cellar. Here he looks carefully about until his eye alights upon a bin labelled "Bonnesfemme, 1824." From this he takes an empty bottle, which he proceeds to fill with a dark red fluid from a large cask in the corner bearing the legend, "Cohen Bros., Pimlico. This side up with care. Full value given for returned empties." Our waiter now places the newly-filled bottle in a small basket, returns to the dining-room, and lays his burden upon your table with the patient smile of a man from whom none of the mysteries of life are hidden.

I want you to take special notice of the bottle in which this particular brand of so-called wine is confined. I want you to inspect the casket in which this precious stimulant lies concealed, like a ruby in a—well, in whatever rubies are usually concealed. You will observe that it is no ordinary bottle such as you could get at a chemist's shop—though, by the by, a "Poison" label would not

be especially inappropriate, if you only knew it. It has not the proud carriage and upright bearing of a bottle of Apollinaris ; it has not that rotundity of figure which distinguishes a flask of Schwepe, nor those sloping shoulders which mark the bottle of Perrier. It is a large black bottle with a venerable and sinister, if somewhat dissipated, air. It looks as though it had spent the night in an attic and had omitted for several months to brush its hair. It is thickly covered with cobwebs. It bears upon its bosom a coating of fine dust designed to give it that respectable and antiquated appearance which shall endear it to the heart of the tyro and may even deceive the connoisseur. (The latter, however, if he wishes to show his *savoir faire*, will probably remark that the wine is too cold. Whereupon the waiter will hurriedly retire to the kitchen, where he will plunge the bottle bodily into a pail of boiling water and return it to the table with its contents in a mulled condition which corresponds more nearly to the temperature of the restaurant.)

But to return to the bottle—always a pleasant task, by the by—and its silvery coat of powder. “Only the actions of the just smell sweet and blossom in the dust,” said one of our national poets ; and from the granular shroud that drapes the sepulchre of this essence of Cohen Frères, Pimlico, there blooms that wonderful exotic which the world (with the

assistance of the wine-waiter) acclaims as *Chateau Bonnefemme*, 1824.

How is it done? you ask. It is no easy matter, I assure you. The aging of a bottle is a task that requires all that a man has of patience, of fortitude, of diligence, of enthusiasm. Yet the work is daily undertaken, cheerfully, quietly, by men who devote their lives to this noble object, who go down to their lonely tombs in Kensal Green ignored by the shallow public (with the sole exception, of course, of Mr Algernon Ashton), unwept (as Milton says), unhonoured, and unhung.

Let me describe the daily round, the common task, of one of these brave bottle-agers.

Rising at dawn, he hastens to the mushroom-shed in the garden and feeds the spiders. An hour later you may find him in the grounds of some carpet-beating factory, collecting dust. On his way home he will pop in for a moment to a rag-and-bone merchant's office, where he may purchase, at a purely nominal price, a dozen empty bottles. Having reached his humble tenement once more, he proceeds to cover these bottles with a peculiar preparation (of which the principal ingredients are salad oil and glucose), peppers them gently with some of the carpet dust, and then issues forth to the mushroom-shed to secure those cobwebs which are such an essential feature of his work.

This is the dangerous moment in the life of the

bottle-ager. Spiders, as everybody is aware, are not animals that can be irritated with impunity. Robert Bruce tried it once; we know with what result. Miss Muffit was forced to postpone her *al-fresco* meal owing to the unwelcome attentions of a member of the tribe of arachnidæ.¹

But in the bright lexicon of the bottle-ager there is no such word as fear. He enters the spiders' den with an intrepid step, pushes aside the giant tarantula that seeks to bar his ingress, reaps his crop of webbing, and in another moment is back in his studio coating his beloved bottles with the filmy product of his diligent if dangerous pets. By nightfall his task is over for the day, and the bottles lie ready to be removed to the cellar of the *restaurateur*, where they will ultimately receive that treatment at the hands of the wine-waiter which I have already described at some length.

I am not naturally soft-hearted, but whenever I think upon the lot of these wretched men, hourly facing death in the cause of bottle-aging, I am sorely tempted to forego and renounce the privilege of ordering *Chateau Bonnefemme* (or indeed any vintage of equal maturity) and to confine myself exclusively to champagne.

¹ A sub-class of tracheate arthropoids.

No. 3—WORM-EATING

IT was, if I remember right, one of the wisest and wittiest of those recently appointed judges who at present adorn the British Bench (and give so much unnecessary work to the Court of Appeal) who expressed surprise on being told by a witness in the course of his evidence that his father was by profession a worm-eater. But then, of course, judges are notoriously prone to wonder. The only thing that does not seem to surprise them, nor, indeed, anybody else, is the regularity and frequency with which their judgments are reversed in a higher court. Philanthropists like Mr Justice Grantham, professional humourists like Mr Justice Darling, legal experts like Mr Justice Ridley, never weary of evincing heartfelt emotion at the mere mention of any incident or fact which has not previously been included within the somewhat limited scope of their own personal experience. Their eyebrows are in a perpetual state of elevation; questions pour from their lips in a limpid stream. But even individuals of more varied experience, who boast a wider outlook upon life than one can hope to find within the minds of his

Majesty's judges, may be pardoned for never having heard of an obscure profession which engages the attention of but a small section of our fellow countrymen, but is nevertheless not undeserving of the notice of those of us who take an interest in the welfare of the working classes.

If you have ever bought a cottage in the country or a house in London; if you have rented an unfurnished flat on the seamy side of Russell Square, or hired a jerry-built maisonette on Wandsworth Common for the summer months; you will doubtless remember what a number of apparently trivial arrangements had to be made before you could finally move in and take possession.

First of all you had to consult the local sanitary expert, who informed you with tears in his eyes that all your drains were out of order, that there was no hot water in the bathroom, and that the pantry sink was a veritable sink of iniquity. You then called in the local plumber, who shook his head for a quarter of an hour, sniffed suspiciously at all the gas jets, and suggested a number of expensive and quite unnecessary structural alterations without which (in his opinion) the house would be unfit for human habitation. Last of all you sent for the local decorator, who produced such patterns of wall papers, friezes, dadoes, etc., as he considered suitable for the various rooms, but which were all so hideous that it was almost

impossible for you to come to any definite decision upon the subject of their comparative demerits. (At first you were inclined to favour that sample of wall-paper upon which was painted a pheasant sitting on an oak tree engaged in the gratifying pastime of swallowing a cherry. But when you realised that this picture recurred twice upon every yard of the paper and that you would consequently be doomed to inhabit a room upon the walls of which at least forty-five pheasants were perpetually and vainly endeavouring to assimilate the same number of cherries, your soul yearned for something a trifle less sensational. You finally fixed upon a plain pink and grey paper dotted about with bunches of unripe grapes, supported by a dado of imitation oak panelling, and crowned by a frieze of wonderfully life-like swallows.)

The decoration of the house being now completed to the satisfaction of every tradesman, if not of yourself, you next turned your attention to the question of furniture. This is, of course, a matter for individual taste. Some people prefer the simple style of the Italian Renaissance, which consists of a bare parquet flooring, one green and gold settee in the centre of the room, a gilt mirror over the fireplace, and a small Tangara figure on the mantelpiece. Others have leanings towards Empire furniture, which is, however, very uncomfortable to live with, as the chairs are too fragile

to bear any but the lightest of weights, and the task of playing one of Mr Sousa's marches with any conviction on a spinet is one to make the stoutest heart quail.

There is no furniture—as a great many clever people (mostly publishers) have said—like books. If you place a copy of “Hymns Ancient and Modern,” the second volume of “Glimpses into the Obvious,” and a few back numbers of *Ally Sloper* in the servant's bedroom, you need not trouble to furnish it any further. But this simple method can be carried to excess, and a whole house which relies for its internal decoration upon the output of the literary profession, backed by a sprinkling of publishers' remainders, is not one to which you can invite guests to spend the week-end with the certainty that the visit will be altogether successful.

Again, it is always open to you to furnish your villa in that early-Victorian fashion of which red plush with tassels forms so essential a feature. But there is a rapidly-increasing prejudice against the style of decoration which satisfied our grandfathers, and persons are becoming more and more inclined to resent living in a house which looks like a cross between the Albert Hall and a Pullman sleeping saloon.

Perhaps, after all, the best furniture is of that solid old-fashioned kind which was prevalent in

the days of Queen Elizabeth and can still be met with in many of the best houses to-day. Huge oak arm-chairs, dark panelling on the walls, heavy chests of drawers, grim cupboards, carved mantel-pieces, wide fire-places, deep-set windows, low raftered ceilings, creaky carpetless stairs, solid doors—all that is typical of the national character of our island race—these make for true domestic comfort and happiness in the home. Nor is such furniture beyond the reach of men of moderate means.

Time was when it was difficult to obtain an antique oak escritoire or a set of twelve solid dining-room chairs for anything less than £10. But *nous avons changé tout cela*, as they say in Brittany. Nowadays, thanks to the indefatigable labours of the worm-eater, we can purchase furniture of almost any age, in almost any condition of senile decay, for a modest sum. The worm-eater is indeed a public benefactor, one who does good by stealth and would blush to find it fame if he had not long ago renounced the gentle art of blushing altogether.

He is usually an elderly man with a slight limp, is the worm-eater. In early youth he was apprenticed to a jobbing house-carpenter, but by sheer ability, by pluck, grit, perseverance and the exercise of those qualities of body and mind which men call genius, he has risen above his station and

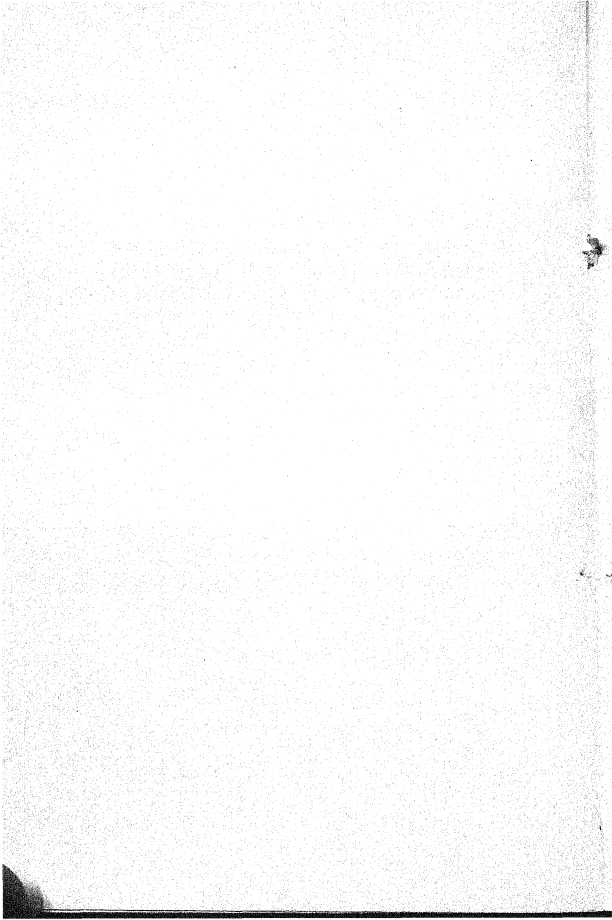
the sphere in which he was born, and now occupies a position in the professional world as far above that of his original employer as Portland Place is above Pimlico. He is not, however, unduly uplifted by success. He does not desert his old master. Nay more ; upon his talents the finances of his employer largely depend. Vainly may the carpenter piece together fragments of deal into the shape of a bureau ; vainly may he turn empty wooden biscuit boxes into cabinets. The public will not look at his wares until the master hand of the worm-eater has been laid upon these trumpery modern fabrics with a mellowing touch that is only comparable to that of Father Time.

Wresting the common deal arm-chair from the clutch of the carpenter, our hero proceeds to paint it all over with a solution of beer and boot-blackening, until it presents the appearance of extreme age. He then takes a diminutive gimlet from his pocket and makes a number of minute holes in the legs and back of the chair, until even an expert would think that a worm had been building its nightly nest for centuries in the wood from which this article of furniture is manufactured. (N.B.—The worm is Nature's lathe ; he turns things while you wait. Hence the old saying to the effect that the worm *will* turn. You cannot prevent him.)

The chair is now ready to be displayed in the

window of "Ye Olde Antique Seconde-Hande Furniture Shoppe," where it will be labelled "A Bargain. Only £37. Supposed to have been one of the Duke of Buckingham's family seats," and will eventually be bought by a wealthy American millionaire who wishes to furnish his home in Mogsville, Va., in a style some three centuries anterior to the discovery of his continent.

You may wonder perhaps why I have included the profession of the worm-eater in this series of "Dangerous Trades." The danger with which the worm-eater is invariably faced is that at any moment he may be found out and sentenced to six months' hard labour for intent to defraud. Truly, 'tis a hard life.



V

“AS OTHERS SEE US”

"Oh, wad some pow'r the giftie gi'e us
To see some folks before they see us."

Old saying.

NO. 1—THE IDLE RICH

AS IMAGINED BY A LABOUR MEMBER

SCENE : *The smoking-room of the Celibates Club. Three Celibates are discovered sitting in arm-chairs in front of the fire, smoking cigarettes. They are good-looking, carefully dressed, elderly young men, of the age usual to clubmen. Their hair is swept boldly back from foreheads which would not otherwise be noticeable. They wear the blasé air and brilliant socks of the typical jeunesse dorée, and are trying to wile away that tedious hour or two which must always elapse before the next meal.*

Celibate No. 1, who is evidently the thinker of the party, is gazing into the fire with a rapt and earnest expression, as though engaged in the solution of some mental problem of peculiar complexity. As a matter of fact, he is merely trying, with the aid of such slight mathematical knowledge as he has acquired at a public school, to reckon up his bridge losses during the past week. "Here," the casual observer might remark, "is

a man of intellect." In which case the casual observer would be wrong.

Celibate No. 2, the frankly frivolous member of the trio, is reading the Winning Post, with the satisfaction of a literary connoisseur who has discovered a journal which combines the domestic style of Modern Society with the elegant diction of Town Topics.

Celibate No. 3, who is older than either of the other two, is deep in the leading article of one of the less sedate of London's halfpenny papers.

CEL. No. 3 (*as he reads the journal in question*): I say! By Jove! (*Celibate No. 2 stirs uneasily in his chair. Celibate No. 1 continues his mental feats of balancing undisturbed.*)

CEL. No. 3: I say! By Jove!

CEL. No. 1 (*irritably*): You said, "By Jove!" before; how you do repeat yourself!

CEL. No. 3: But look here! (*pointing to paper*) D'you see what one of these Radical Johnnies says?

CEL. No. 1 (*wearily*): My dear chap, do you think I've got nothing better to do than to waste my time reading the rot that every Socialist feller chooses to gas about?

CEL. No. 3 (*with the natural indignation of a man who has not completed a hard day's work at Knightsbridge Barracks until nearly 9 a.m.*): Hang it all! You've got more time to waste than some of us!

(He broods over the arduous nature of a military profession.)

CEL. No. 2 *(joining in)*: What are you chaps jawing about?

CEL. No. 3: We were talking about these Labour Johnnies.

CEL. No. 2 *(without enthusiasm)*: What about 'em?

CEL. No. 3: Why, it says here *(pointing to the newspaper)* that they're going to burn down the East End of London, and coming to live in the West.

CEL. No. 2 *(roused at last from his hereditary state of coma)*: I say! By Jove!

CEL. No. 1 *(to Cel. No. 3)*: That's exactly what you said.

CEL. No. 2 *(disregarding the interruption)*: D'you think they really mean it?

CEL. No. 3: 'Course they mean it! Why *(irrelevantly)*, I tell you, this Radical Government's capable of anything!

CEL. No. 2 *(to No. 1)*: You'll have the Unemployed sharing your flat in Jermyn Street before the week is out.

CEL. No. 3 *(hopefully, but without conviction)*: An Englishman's flat is his castle!

CEL. No. 1 *(ignoring this crumb of comfort)*: I tell you what it is; if things go on like this, I shall clear out! England's no place for a chap!

I shall go to Monte Carlo (*irrevocably*), and stay there.

CEL. No. 2 (*frivolously*): This will be a bitter blow for the Government! You'll break it gently to them, old chap, won't you?

CEL. No. 1 (*with reasonable annoyance*): Don't be an ass!

(*There is a pause, during which the Three Celibates ponder silently over some of the more obvious political problems of the day.*)

CEL. No. 3 (*apparently inspired*): Rummy times we live in!

CEL. No. 1: You're right there! Nothing's safe nowadays! The rights of property no longer respected! The country in the hands of demagogues!

CEL. No. 2: Hear! Hear!

CEL. No. 1: You may laugh——

CEL. No. 2: Thanks awfully!

CEL. No. 1: You may laugh, I say; but it's no laughing matter! We shall live to see another Commune, some of us!

CEL. No. 2 (*cheerfully*): I'll write to Monte Carlo and tell you all about it.

CEL. No. 3: You think it a good joke; just because, by Jove! it doesn't happen to affect you.

CEL. No. 2 (*indignantly*): Not affect me? What about my covert-shooting?

CEL. No. 3 (*with emotion*): My dear old chap!

CEL. No. 1: In those woods of yours at Bracefield Castle, which now are thick with rabbits, the family of the local Labour Member will soon be gathering blackberries!

CEL. No. 2: As long as they don't gather rabbits, I can bear it.

CEL. No. 1: That is not the darkest side of the picture. How will you fancy the children of the Unemployed fishing for tiddlers in the Castle moat?

CEL. No. 2: I can't fancy it; 'cos I don't know what a tiddler is.

CEL. No. 3 (*impressively*): You mark my words! (*The other two mark his words.*) This is what we shall come to. Rustic cricket will be played upon our velvet lawns. And worse is yet to come. Model dwelling-houses, industrial works, shall rise upon our golf-courses!

CEL. No. 2: A Rowton House would make a capital bunker! Fancy teeing up on a factory chimney!

CEL. No. 3: What I always say is——

CEL. No. 2: (*interrupting*): We don't want to know what you always say.

CEL. No. 3 (*making a supreme mental effort to talk sense*): What I say is this: These Socialistic Johnnies will go too far.

CEL. No. 2: The farther they go the better; as long as they stay there.

CEL. No. 1: My dear chap, there's no real danger,

if only England doesn't lose her head. Say what you will——

CEL. No. 2 : I won't ! I promise not to !

CEL. No. 1 (*waving him aside*) : Say what you will, there's a good deal of sterling commonsense about the place still, though you mightn't think so to look around you.

CEL. No. 2 (*looking around him*) : I don't !

CEL. No. 1 (*breaking in*) : You're right. It doesn't matter which way people vote, we Britons will always be a sensible, level-headed lot. Of course, we must admit, however regretfully, that the upper classes no longer have a monopoly of intellect. (*Celibate No. 3 looks self-conscious.*) The country'll find out its mistake before long. We shall have a revulsion of feeling ; we shall have a return to old ideas ; we shall have——

CEL. No. 2 : Have a drink ! (*No. 1's peroration is completely spoiled*).

(*Enter Celibate No. 4. He is a cheerful, sensible, and thoroughly healthy and popular young man, with an exuberant affection for his fellows which he generally expresses by striking those unfortunates upon the back. His advent is like a breath of fresh air, or a ray of sunshine, or any of those agreeable things of which Londoners are so fond, and see so little.*)

CEL. No. 4 (*heartily*) : Hullo, you chaps ! (*He looks round for an unprotected back. The other*

Celibates nestle lower in their chairs to escape his onslaught.) Why, what's the matter with you fellows? You look as glum as a lot of owls!

CEL. No. 3 (*who resents being called an owl; in a dignified manner*): We were merely discussing the political situation. (*Tries to look as though he had a brain, and fails utterly.*)

CEL. No. 4: Good heavens! Is that all? But what on earth has the political situation to do with us?

CEL. No. 3 (*sententiously*): The political situation has to do with everybody.

CEL. No. 4: What an extraordinary idea!

CEL. No. 2: Haven't you read the papers? Things are pretty serious!

CEL. No. 4: Nonsense! Serious?

CEL. No. 2 (*impressively*): The Unemployed have threatened to take his (*pointing to Celibate No. 1*) flat in Jermyn Street.

CEL. No. 4: Splendid! I wish someone would take my house in Green Street.

CEL. No. 1: This is a question of taking by force, not through a house-agent.

CEL. No. 3: Yes; with a Radical Government in power——

CEL. No. 4: What *does* it matter which Party is in power? Good heavens! I can remember fifteen years ago how we all predicted every sort

of social upheaval. Did anything happen? I'm not a politician, thank goodness! (*With true British impartiality.*) I think both Parties equally rotten, if you ask me. And if you'll take my advice, you won't bother your heads about 'em. They ain't worth it, really. Radicals, Tories, all the rest, I've no use for any of them! Let 'em stew in their own juice, I say! (*Dismisses them from his mind.*)

CEL. No. 3 (*somewhat perplexed*): And are we to do nothing?

CEL. No. 4: 'Course we're to do something.

CEL. No. 1: And that is?

CEL. No. 4: Come and have lunch!

No. 2—THE LABOUR MEMBER

AS IMAGINED BY THE IDLE RICH

SCENE: *The Dining-room of the House of Commons. TIME: 6 p.m. The room is empty, save for the presence of an elderly waiter, who has just finished laying a table in the corner, and is busily engaged in folding a napkin into the shape of a water-lily. He lays the napkin reverently at one end of the table, rearranges the knives and forks with mathematical precision on either side of the water-lily, breathes tenderly into one of the spoons to remove a speck of tarnish, and finally moves away with that deferential, tender-footed gait peculiar to his profession.*

Enter three Labour Members. Their clothes are lamentably new, having but recently left the peg; they wear the scarlet ties of Socialism, and their trousers are fastened at the knee with string. This is but their second visit to the House, and they are still defiantly shy, but extremely anxious to appear at their ease. They do not seem to know what to do with their feet.

The waiter approaches them with that air of

conscious superiority combined with tolerant scorn which such persons assume towards those whom they deem to be "parvenus," and politely awaits their instructions.

The Labour Members look at one another nervously.

LABOUR MEMBER No. 1 (*taking the bull by the horns*): Me an' my mates wants a bit o' supper.

WAITER (*smiling in a superior manner which is very hard to bear*): Yessir. The regular dinner will not be ready until 'alf-past seven.

LABOUR MEMBER No. 2: Wot does 'e say?

L. M. No. 1 (*explaining*): Sez we carn't 'ave no reg'lar dinner till arparseven.

L. M. No. 3 (*gruffly*): I don't want no reg'lar dinner; just a snack, that's all.

L. M. No. 2 (*with withering sarcasm*): An' this is the 'Ouse o' Commons!

L. M. No. 3 (*feliculously*): Precious short commons, I call it!

WAITER (*coming to the rescue*): If you will give your orders, gentlemen, I dessay I can get you somethink 'ot in a few minutes.

L. M. No. 2: Wot does 'e say?

L. M. No. 1: Sez we can 'ave a bit of 'ot if we orders it. (*To L. M. No. 2.*) Wot's yours?

L. M. No. 2 (*after earnest thought*): Sossidge an' mashed for me.

L. M. No. 3 (*with some originality*): I'll 'ave two thick-'uns an' a doorstep meself.

WAITER (*raising his eyebrows, as far as it is possible for a waiter to do so*): I beg your pardon, sir?

L. M. No. 3 (*with the courtesy of his class*): Granted!

L. M. No. 1 (*to the WAITER, interpreting the wants of his colleague*): The gent sez 'e'll 'ave a couple o' bits o' toast an' a hegg.

WAITER: Very good, sir. (*Is about to go.*)

L. M. No. 1 (*stopping him*): 'Arf a mo! You 'aven't took my order yet. (*Ponders deeply.*) 'Ave you got such a thing as a nice bit o' tripe?

WAITER: I'll enquire, sir; but I rather fancies——

L. M. No. 1: No consequence! If tripe's orf, I'll 'ave some stoo'd eels, by way of a relish.

WAITER: Yessir. (*Moves away with a chastened expression.*)

L. M. No. 3 (*who has hitherto taken but little interest in the proceedings, calling after the WAITER*): An' a pint o' bitter for me, mister!

L. Ms. Nos. 1 and 2 (*with enthusiasm*): Same 'ere!

WAITER: Very good, sir. (*Exit.*)

(*The LABOUR MEMBERS sit down at the table and remain silent, gazing at their boots.* L. M. No. 3 gradually falls into a troubled sleep.)

L. M. No. 1 (*making conversation*): Haffable cove, that, with the servyet.

L. M. No. 2: 'Im? Ho yes. 'E's all right, so long as 'e don't give 'isself airs.

L. M. No. 1: 'E knows 'is place too well, I lay. 'E knows as its the likes o' hus as pays for the likes of 'im.

L. M. No. 2 (*profoundly*): Har!

Enter a Doorkeeper, with a letter. He looks round the room, fixes its embarrassed occupants with his basilisk eye for a moment, and then retires.

L. M. No. 1 (*suitably impressed*): 'Oo's that, I wonder? Did you see the gold chain 'e 'ad on 'is vest?

L. M. No. 2 (*tentatively*): P'raps it's the Lord Mayor?

L. M. No. 1 (*with superior knowledge*): Lord Mayor be jiggered! It'll be the Serjeant-at-Arms; hat's 'oo that'll be.

L. M. No. 2: An' 'oo's 'e?

L. M. No. 1 (*facetiously*): You'll find out soon enough if you don't beyave!

L. M. No. 2: Go along with yer! I ain't afraid o' no serjeant!

L. M. No. 1 (*with meaning*): Har! You just wait!

L. M. No. 2 (*changing the subject to some pleasanter topic*): I see'd a cove this artemnoon with a blue ribbon round 'is bloomin' neck. Said 'e was a messenger from the 'Ouse o' Lords.

L. M. No. 1 (*in the true Socialistic spirit*): I don't 'old with them blue ribbons an' fallals meself.

The WAITER returns with a variety of dishes and three tankards of ale, which he places on the table.

L. Ms. Nos. 1 and 2 (*simultaneously raising the mugs to their lips*): Good 'ealth!

(The Division Bell rings loudly.)

L. M. No. 1: Lor! There goes the "buzzer"! We must get back to work, I s'pose.

L. M. No. 2 (*kicking No. 3*): Wake up, Bill! The whistle's blown!

L. M. No. 3 (*waking gradually, and evidently labouring under the impression that he is at home*): Wot's up, mother? Six o'clock? All serene! I'll be down in arf a jiffy.

L. M. No. 1: Wake up, matey! (*Aside.*) Bless 'is 'eart, 'e thinks 'e's back at the factory!

L. M. No. 2: Come along, lads, or we'll be docked.

L. M. No. 1 (*gazing tenderly at the sausage which is reposing in a nest of mashed potatoes on his plate*): It's 'ard to leave a nice dish o' meat like that!

L. M. No. 2 (*regretfully*): An' my hegg, too!
The three Members rise, empty their tankards hurriedly, and move away to the Division Lobby, to mingle with a crowd of others who have been summoned from various different parts of the building to vote as the Whips direct on a question of whose very nature they are sublimely ignorant.

LATER ON. IN THE HOUSE.

(An eminent Statesman has just finished reading as much of his peroration as he has not dropped on to the floor during the course of his speech, and resumes his seat amid loud applause. All three Labour Members make frantic efforts to catch the Speaker's eye. He fails to notice their appealing glances.)

L. M. No. 1 *(with recollections of the Board School days of his boyhood strong upon him)*: Teacher! Teacher! *(He snaps his fingers loudly.)*

THE SPEAKER: Order! Order!

L. M. No. 2 *(who once appeared as witness in a police-court case)*: Your Worship—

THE SPEAKER: Order! Order! *(Catching the eye of L. M. No. 3)*: The Honourable Member for Pudstone-on-the-Swamp.

L. M. No. 3 *(rising to the occasion)*: Feller-citizens!

(Loud cries of "Order!")

L. M. No. 3 *(astonished at such un-English treatment)*: Gentlemen all!

(Order! Order!)

THE SPEAKER *(kindly)*: The Honourable Member must address himself to the Chair.

L. M. No. 3 *(losing his head)*: Chair? Wot chair? *(Looks wildly round.)* I don't see no chair.

(Laughter, and cries of "Order!")

L. M. No. 2 (*coming to the rescue of his friend in distress*) : Comrades all ! I rise——

(*Order ! Order !*)

L. M. No. 1 (*joining in*) : Your Worship, I——

(*Cries of " Sit down ! " " Order ! Order ! " &c.*)

L. M. No. 3 : Britons ! Hall I arsk is fair play !
(*" Order ! "*)

L. M. No. 2 : Give a chap a charnst !

(*Uproar.*)

The Serjeant-at-Arms moves across the floor of the House in the direction of the Labour Members.

L. M. No. 2 (*remembering the warning of his colleague*) : 'Ere, I'm orf ! (*He goes to the door. The other three Labour Members follow him.*)

L. M. No. 1 (*as he passes the Speaker's chair, turning to the House with an expression that is almost noble in the intensity of its bitterness*) : An' this (*pointing to the assembly*)—this is the 'Ome o' Free Speech ! (*Words fail him.*)

The three Labour Members return to the dining-room, to find that their repast has been cleared away. Disgusted with such an experience of political life, they turn their weary footsteps homeward in the direction of the Horseferry Road.

CURTAIN.

No. 3—THE COMMONS AT WORK

AS IMAGINED BY A MEMBER OF THE
HOUSE OF LORDS

SCENE: *The House of Commons. A debate is in progress, but the Chamber is comparatively empty. The Speaker is comatose from sheer boredom: the very Mace seems to have fallen asleep with its head on the table. Among the few enthusiasts reclining on the green benches may be observed the following: A Radical Member, a Tory Member, a Protectionist Member, a Free Trade Member, a Tariff Reform Member, a Labour Member, an Irish Nationalist Member, and a Little Englander.*

The Motion before the House is:—"That in view of the deterioration in physique and efficiency of our English stock, as exemplified of late upon the athletic grounds of the United Kingdom, a Royal Commission be appointed to enquire into the subject and to report what legislation (if any) is required to remedy the evil."

THE TORY MEMBER (*who has been speaking for an hour and twenty minutes; concluding a perora-*

tion upon which he has expended much thought and labour) : . . . And so, Sir, I repeat, once more, that the juvenile degeneracy, which we see rampant upon every side in Great Britain to-day, is not only a source of shame and weakness to the country at large, and a menace to the Empire—an Empire upon which, I may add, the sun never sets—but is further calculated to endanger the peace of the whole civilised world. The heedless attitude of the present Government towards a question of such vital importance is nothing less than a grave public scandal, and adds yet another indelible blot to the none too spotless escutcheon of the Liberal Party.

THE RADICAL MEMBER : After listening patiently to my hon. friend's illuminating if somewhat lengthy speech, marked as it was by a fluency of obvious platitude, by a smooth inadequacy of infelicitous verbiage which, I feel sure, must not have come as a surprise to any of the hon. gentleman's friends on either side of the House, I can only deplore that so prolonged and well-meaning an address should have been marred by a reference in doubtful taste to the escutcheon of the Party to which I have the honour and privilege of belonging. That an hon. Member who has consistently opposed measures of so beneficent a character as the Licensing Bill and the Education Act, who has spoken repeatedly in favour of that

odious outrage to civilisation which we are apt to describe euphemistically as Chinese Labour——

THE SPEAKER : Order, Order ! I must request the hon. gentleman to confine himself to the question before the House.

THE RADICAL MEMBER : I am only too ready, Sir, to bow to the ruling of the Chair ; but at the same time I must express my very natural disgust that any hon. Member who should have sullied his fingers in the mire of Yellow Slavery——

THE SPEAKER : Order, Order !

THE LITTLE ENGLANDER : I rise to a point of order, Sir, to ask that the hon. Member who referred just now to an " Empire upon which the sun never sets " should be called upon to withdraw an expression which is so entirely at variance with the opinions of a large section of the proletariat of this island.

THE TORY MEMBER : I will gladly amend my remark to suit the parochial requirements of the hon. gentleman. I beg to replace the offending phrase by a reference to an " Empire upon some portion of which the sun is always setting." I trust that my hon. friend is satisfied !

THE PROTECTIONIST MEMBER : Honourable gentlemen on both sides of the House appear to me to be wandering from the point at issue, which is, as I understand, a question of the physical degeneracy of our fellow-citizens. The remedy,

Sir, is an obvious and a simple one. So long as we continue to allow the free importation of such games as Spanish *pelota*, the American base-ball and cakewalk, "Russian scandal," Swedish exercises, lacrosse, ping-pong, and suchlike alien pursuits, into this country—so long as we encourage the unfair competition of similar foreign pastimes with our own essentially British games of cricket and football—we only have ourselves to blame for the fact that we are being gradually crowded out of the playing-fields of the world. By the imposition of a small ten per cent. duty on alien athletics—nay more, by a poll-tax on all foreign athletes, on the Belgian and Dutch oarsmen who attend the Henley Regattas, on the Japanese acrobats and professors of ju-jitsu who congest the stages of our music-halls, on the American students or millionaires who snatch the trophies of our first-born at the 'Varsity Sports or at Ranelagh—our own people, who upon the football-fields of Great Britain earn a precarious living with their feet—I may almost call it a "foot-to-mouth" existence—

THE RADICAL MEMBER (*momentarily inspired*): Does the hon. gentleman propose to tax the poor man's corns? (*Laughter, during which the remainder of the Protectionist Member's remarks are lost.*)

THE FREE TRADE MEMBER: I regret that I am utterly unable to agree with my hon. friend's scheme of taxation, a scheme which is so directly

opposed to the lofty principles to which the responsible Governments of this country have long been pledged. No, Sir; let us erect no tariff hurdles, if I may so express myself, in the running-path of our brother athletes from across the sea.

THE PROTECTIONIST MEMBER: My hon. friend will not deny that since the introduction from Russia of a game called bridge, Englishmen of all classes spend many hours, which they might otherwise devote to bathing in the Serpentine or bicycling in Hyde Park, at the card-table of some fashionable club.

THE FREE TRADE MEMBER: The hon. gentleman takes a very extreme case. Believe me, the physical degeneration of our countrymen has been—for Party purposes, I fear—grossly exaggerated. Nothing is so stimulating as competition. After all, are other nations any better off than we ourselves?

THE PROTECTIONIST MEMBER: What about America?

THE FREE TRADE MEMBER: In America, as we know, the football player takes his life in his hand; and he takes the lives of other people any way he can! He, indeed, is "protected"! Protected with armour, with padding, with a nose-guard! Does my hon. friend desire that Britons should descend to such un-English methods as these? No! A thousand times no!

THE PROTECTIONIST MEMBER: Germany—

THE FREE-TRADE MEMBER: The German is in a worse plight than we are. Here (*producing a Blue Book*) are some statistics compiled by the famous Professor Phoozledammer of Heidelberg. From these it appears that the ground-man at the Potsdam Golphenmanschettenknopfe—which, I may say, for the benefit of hon. gentlemen opposite (*looking pointedly at the Labour Members*), is the same as our “Golf-course”—earns a weekly wage of what would correspond to about eight shillings and sixpence in our coinage, and lives upon a diet of sausages which are made exclusively from defunct dogs of the Dalmatian or “carriage” variety. Would that be possible in England to-day? (*Pauses for effect. None apparent.*) By the laws of the Rugby Union—

THE LABOUR MEMBER (*interrupting*): Sir! The gentleman wot spoke larst mentioned the Union. 'Ere, I take it, lies the crux of the 'ole question. Wot I wants to arsk the Government is this:—Are non-Union men to be allowed to play in the Union matches, to take the ball from the honest feet of working men who pay their subscriptions reg'lar? Har, Sir, we've 'eard of the “All Blacks”; but we doesn't 'ear so much o' the “All Blacklegs”! An' there's another scandal as calls for immediate legislation—namely, the present system of allowing a player as is

engaged for one kind o' job to do the work of another man. This, Sir, is agin the 'ole spirit of Trades-Unionism throughout the land. 'Ow long is the Three-quarter-back to be permitted to kick the goal, while the 'Alf-back stands idly by, unemployed, out o' work? Again, Sir—and 'ere I think we 'ave a very strong argument in favour of a reversal o' the Taff Vale decision—it is imperative that some measure be passed making it permissible for the funds of the Rugby Union to be used for the purpose of peacefully picketing the Referee. *(He sits down suddenly on his Trilby hat.)*

THE TARIFF-REFORM MEMBER: I cannot help thinking, Mr Speaker, that without the necessity of rushing to the extreme methods suggested by hon. gentleman opposite, some golden mean might be arrived at to solve the problem which we have in mind. A policy of preferential treatment between the Mother Country and her Colonies, by means of which we might be allowed to win back upon the cricket-grounds of Australia the laurels (or ashes, as the case may be) of which our New Zealand cousins have robbed us in this country—a policy by which the standardisation of British sports might help to bind the Empire still closer together, might conduce to a still warmer Union, to a Union of Hearts—to the formation of a League which should be not national only, but Imperial!

THE IRISH MEMBER: Ye'll excuse me, Mr

Shpaker, sorr, a moment. If ye've five minutes to spare I'll not kape yez half-an-hour. 'Tis this worrd Union, bedad, that sets me thinking. Wasn't me own grandfather driven out av his hovel in the back of Tipperary be the licentious Saxon souldiery? (*Order, Order!*) Who was it shot me ould Uncle Mike in the back with an air-gun at the widdy's wake? Didn't Patrick O'Brady, the informer (bad cess to his elbow!), sow mustard an' cress for sphite in Father Clancy's praty-beds? Who murdered Larry Brice's pig, that he doted on like a mother? And why? Did he ever turn his back on a friend or a bottle to give him—— (*The Speaker's efforts to restrain this flow of reminiscence having proved unavailing, the police have by this time entered the House, and the forcible ejection of the Irish Member breaks up the debate.*)

CURTAIN.

No. 4—THE LORDS AT WORK

AS IMAGINED BY A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE
OF COMMONS

SCENE: *The House of Lords. Time, 4.25 p.m.*
Prayers are just over. The officiating Bishop retires, and the congregation, consisting of the Lord Chancellor, the Clerks at the Table, and one very young Peer, who has been dragged reluctantly from the smoking-room to complete the necessary quorum, sink back into their seats with an inward glow of satisfaction, conscious of duty nobly done.

*The day's work is about to commence. During the last half hour motors and carriages have been rolling up to the Peer's Entrance of the House of Lords, disgorging their noble occupants, and concentrating round the statue of Richard Cœur de Lion, where the chauffeurs and coachmen compare notes, and discuss punctures and navi-
cular. Members of the Upper House have meanwhile alighted from their equipages, with the assistance of a scarlet-coated door-keeper, whose appearance would be improved if he could be induced to part with the moustache which he*

still clings to as the chief relic of a distinguished military career.

Hereditary legislators stroll into the Gilded Chamber in a leisurely fashion, in ones and twos, discussing the latest romance of the Peerage or the musical comedy stage.

Obsequious messengers move noiselessly along the corridors bearing Blue-books. An occasional waiter staggers by under a burden of buttered toast, the favourite pabulum of Peers.

In the Library an elderly nobleman is fast asleep in an armchair, and stirs uneasily as a steamboat sounds its siren in the river below.

An air of lethargic calm, almost of coma, pervades the building, reminding one of a Sunday afternoon at the Garrick Club. The business of the day has not yet begun. There are still one or two minutes before the House need turn its attention to practical matters. One by one the noble Lords take their seats, and peruse the printed paper which proclaims the arduous nature of the work in hand. The official reporter is still sharpening his pencil.

The Strangers' Gallery is half-filled with interested foreigners, anxious to observe the workings of what is perhaps the most practical Assembly in the world. They look down curiously upon the collection of serious, well-dressed, well-educated gentlemen, moved by no

petty personal or Party motives, but genuinely inspired by patriotism and lofty principle to sacrifice their time in the interests of their country. And, taking them as a whole, the Lords are, we may suppose, as representative a body of level-headed, business-like Englishmen as one could find anywhere. Country squires, owning huge estates which are tactfully managed by capable agents with Scotch accents; landed proprietors, with acres of first-class shooting; directors of South African mining companies; Metropolitan ground landlords whose desirable family residences in Bloomsbury, Chelsea, or Mayfair, bring them in an annual income sufficient to keep the wolf from the portico of any mansion in Grosvenor Square—these and many other types of our aristocracy may be seen within the hallowed precincts of the Upper House.

There is the youthful and earnest politician whose enthusiasm is gradually being damped by the chilling atmosphere that surrounds him, and who inwardly deplores the heritage of noble birth from whose consequences he cannot escape; the voluble Cabinet Minister with but a single speech, of an agricultural character, which he makes upon every possible occasion; the Liberal Peer whose claims for high office have been disregarded, and who is proportionately disappointed; the Tory veteran who is always ready

to talk for twenty minutes on any conceivable subject, and can discourse with equal fluency upon Conscription or Deceased Wives' Sisters; the Radical divine who disagrees with all his colleagues on the Bishops' Bench; the Unionist Duke who possesses to a peculiar degree the welcome gift of silence.

By this time all are settled in their places. The Lord Chancellor looks impatiently at his watch. Silence reigns supreme. Suddenly Big Ben booms out. It is half-past four! The Leader of His Majesty's Government in the House of Lords rises to his feet. The occupants of the Strangers' Gallery lean forward to catch the Speaker's words. The reporter pricks up his ears, behind each of which nestles a pointed pencil, and opens his notebook.

THE LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT (*with quiet dignity*): I move that the House do now adjourn.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR (*mumbling rapidly and somewhat indistinctly*): The motion is that the House do now adjourn. Those in favour will say "Content" . . . I think the Contents have it.

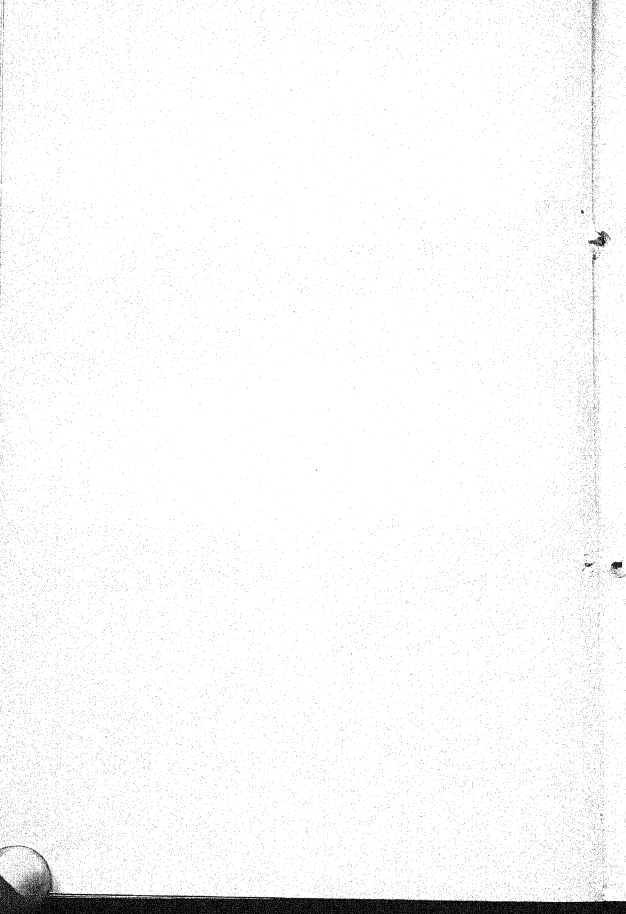
With a deep sigh of relief the meeting breaks up. The Lord Chancellor marches out in procession, attended by his official escort. The foreigners return

home, much impressed. The House empties with great rapidity. In the courtyard outside the police are busy calling up carriages. In the library the elderly nobleman sleeps on. The dining-room gradually fills with Peers in search of buttered toast. The day's work is over.

VI

WHERE TO SPEND THE
HOLIDAYS

(The Editor disclaims all responsibility as to the correctness of the Author's facts. Letters of complaint or abuse should be sent direct to the Publishers.)



No. 1—BRIGHTON

THE holiday season is always with us. Whether it be at Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, or in the height of summer, the time when we can look forward with pleasurable anticipation to a few weeks' freedom from toil, to a brief release from office drudgery, is ever at hand. *Tempus est ludendi* as that incomparable humorist, Cicero, replied when someone asked him what time it was. But though everybody is equally anxious to spend his vacation in as enjoyable a fashion as he can, it is not always easy to make up one's mind as to the suitable locality in which to pass those moments of enforced leisure which recur with such delightful regularity throughout the year.

One thing we are all apparently agreed upon, and that is the necessity for getting away from the domestic hearth as far and as quickly as possible. Though one's ain fireside may possess exceptional attractions during the busy months, when the English holiday season has at length set in with its customary severity, there springs to the human breast a strong desire to escape from the commonplace surroundings of domestic life and seek

recreation in the wider spaces of the outside world.

The popular ideas of enjoyment differ vastly. One man delights in stalking cariboo in Central Africa, another hastens to Norway to fish for reaper, a third hies him to his native heath and plays cricket on the village green with twenty-one other fellows seven times hotter than himself. One man takes a walking tour in the Scilly Isles with a tooth-brush, a copy of *The Open Road*, a change of socks in his knapsack, and a "late lark singing" in his heart; another mounts his motor-bicycle and sits in a thorough draught for ten hours a day, while the picturesque scenery of the Lake District flashes by him unobserved. But to the majority of mankind the word "holiday" suggests a period of complete repose, when the tired breadwinner may don his oldest suit of flannels and sit in the sun, with a French novel in one hand, a cigar in the other, and in his breast the strong determination to fall into a profound sleep, from which he may only occasionally awake in time to partake of that series of Gargantuan meals which punctuate the day so pleasantly.

Where can a holiday-maker find a more perfect haven of rest than by the shores of what Swinburne has called "the salt estranging sea," that illimitable ocean which is the peculiar heritage of the Anglo-Saxon race? What can be pleasanter

than to lie at full length upon the yellow sands, listening to the innumerable laughter of the waves, while an adjacent troupe of nigger minstrels (armed with a harmonium) render the comic songs of yesteryear in a manner calculated to make the tide go out and never come back, and somebody's large black dog, which has just triumphantly retrieved a walking-stick from the sea, bounds up to you and shakes its sopping coat in your face.

Hark! in the distance, the shrill cry of the bumboat-woman advertising her modest wares to the passer-by! Hark again! the hoarse commands of some old sea captain urging his crew to scuttle the keel, or belay, or man the mizzen hatch-boom, or whatever is the exact operation for putting out to sea!

What more charming spectacle is to be found than that of a group of sunburnt, bare-legged children making mud pies upon the beach? How delightful it is to see the little ones enjoying themselves so innocently! Paterfamilias is sleeping gracefully in the centre of the castle which his darlings have erected around him, while every now and then baby fills his ears with sand, or little Horace cunningly excavates a channel up which the incoming tide may be diverted into his unsuspecting parent's new brown boots. Mother sits in the background knitting an antimacassar and smiling at her offspring, while from time to

time little Sophie hastens to her side with a large piece of evil-smelling seaweed, or a defunct crab in the last stages of decomposition, which the darling child drops affectionately into the maternal lap ere she hastens away in search of more wonders of the deep.

Epicures may rave about the comforts of our metropolitan workhouses, with their porcelain baths and their boards groaning with good cheer; gourmets may lick their lips over the prospect of a civic banquet of caviare and turtle soup; but to the healthy holiday-maker there is nothing more exquisite than three-pennyworth of shrimps in a paper bag, there is nothing more luxurious than the simple pallet bed of the seaside lodging-house. "Damp sheets and a flowing sea" cries the poet, and that cry still re-echoes in the heart of every Englishman, as he catches sight of the expanse of dark blue ocean which bounds his island home. Is it not here that Britannia rules the waves? Not only do her men-of-war brave the battle and the breeze upon a thousand seas, but her far-flung fleet of ocean tramps, commanded by Norwegians, manned by Poles, and stoked by Lascars, supply world-wide evidence of that unquestioned maritime supremacy which is the talk of half Brighton.

Brighton has been rightly named "the Queen of the South." As a health resort she has no equal and few superiors within a radius of ten miles.

Her climate is mild yet invigorating ; her shrimps make the shrimps of her neighbours look less like prawns than ever ; her niggers are only rivalled by the Ethiopians at Margate ; her bath-chairs are more like baths and less like chairs than any I can think of ; her pier is unique, with the exception of that at Southsea, Harrogate, and a few other places whose names I forget ; her hotel accommodation is matchless and unlimited.

Which of us has not at some time or other in his mad and giddy youth spent a week-end at the "Metropole" in the company of a sister, a cousin, or an aunt ? That famous establishment still holds its own, as in the days of long ago. Outside its doors stand a score of well-appointed motor-cars, waiting to convey their owners to neighbouring retreats. Within its gilded dining-rooms a hundred deferential waiters minister to the wants of their replete patrons. See, at those tables by the window, self-conscious scions of the *jeunesse stage-doorée* smile into the eyes of their fair companions, who look as though they had walked straight out of picture post-cards.

But the society here is not exclusively frivolous. Perish the thought ! The gathering is as mixed as the bathing ought to be. Rural deans in gaiters, Anarchists in red ties, Mr Bernard Shaw disguised as a wolf in sheep's-wool clothing, Mr George Grossmith, jun. in riding breeches and spurs (his

bicycle is sometimes very restive in the early morning), half the world and his wife, and the other half of the world with somebody else's wife, may be observed spending a happy Sunday at what is perhaps the most popular seaside watering-place in the kingdom. Brighton is indeed a perfect spot in which to pass a peaceful week-end. I often wish that I had ever been there.

No. 2—SOUTHSEA AND PORTSMOUTH

SOLITUDE, as a statesman once remarked after dinner, is the mother of great thoughts. There arrives a moment in the daily lives of all of us when we would be alone; when the companionship of our fellows is distasteful to us; when we desire to commune with our own souls in the sacred privacy of our own society. The hour when an attack of this kind comes on is obviously not an appropriate one to select for spending a week at Southsea; for at Southsea the hermit is unwelcome, the recluse is out of place, and the solitary cannot elude his fellow man.

Southsea is, in short, a popular and populous holiday centre, whither excursionists resort in crowded and confused masses; where the air is filled with the concertina selections of the light-hearted bean-feaster, and the beach bristles with those banana skins with which civilised man attempts to relieve the dull monotony of Nature's handiwork.

Cheap week-end tickets to Southsea and Portsmouth (which, it may here be observed, are two towns so like one another that it is impossible to tell them apart), are issued every Friday, Saturday,

and Sunday, available to return on the two following days. A dog ticket only costs eighteenpence, and by travelling under the seat or in the rack (which, however, is intended for light articles only) it is occasionally possible for an astute passenger to reach his destination without a ticket at all. I do not, of course, recommend an evasion of the law, but am sufficiently Jesuitical to realise that the end justifies the means, especially when that end be Southend. (*Isn't this article about South-sea ?—Publisher. My mistake.—R. D. B.*)

The scenery of Southsea is not perhaps its strongest point; there is a certain element of flatness about the little town which does not add to the picturesqueness of the place, but is nevertheless an excellent quality in the eyes of bath-chairmen and weak-kneed invalids suffering from fatty degeneration of the heart. But if the appearance of Southsea itself lacks something of ruggedness or romance, this deficiency is more than made up for by the magnificent view across Spithead Roads to what somebody has felicitously called "The Kitchen Garden of England."

Compassed on three sides by the inviolate sea, the little sand-bound harbour stands out like an opal set in a circle of pure gold. On the water, as far as the eye can reach, and even farther, many a strange craft plies its way through the cool translucent wave. Here you may see the grim-

visaged man-of-war lying side by side with the saucy corvette; the ungainly transport anchored cheek by jowl with the natty Government pinnace. Yachts and yawls, brigantines, barges, barques, bites, sloops, smacks, skiffs, snookers, snippers, clippers, cutters, and colliers, pass to and fro until the eye of the onlooker wearies of this ceaseless kaleidoscopic show, and the jaded holiday-maker seeks the more homely attractions of the Clarence Pier.

The Clarence Pier, like some of my best after-dinner stories, is as broad as it is long. In its centre stands a splendid concert-room, where on Saturday afternoons and evenings a series of low-necked tenors delight the visitors by rendering touching ballads founded upon romantic subjects culled from the familiar drama of daily life. Here, too, on Sundays, suitable ditties such as "Step Lightly, there's Crape upon the Door," or "Locked in the Stable with the Sheep" are sung by the local choir, and some of the finest military bands in Southsea, if not in the whole civilised world, give (by kind permission of their respective colonels) selections from *Our Miss Gibbs*, *Tannhäuser*, *The Dollar Princess*, *Elijah*, and the less noteworthy compositions of their own bandmasters.

The Clarence Esplanade extends from the pier to Southsea Castle, and is the resting-place of a number of war trophies which no Englishman can gaze at without an accelerated circulation and a pro-

portional rise of temperature. Here you may note the Nelson memorial, inscribed with the sentence, "Ready, aye ready," which was, of course, the motto of Admiral Napier and has no connection at all with the hero of Trafalgar. Here, too, the anchor of the historic *Victory* is to be seen, mounted on a granite base, upon which is engraved the message, "England expects every man to do his duty," an inaccurate paraphrase of Nelson's famous signal.

On the South Parade Pier another band provides music of a less classical kind for the edification of tourists of simpler tastes. There are public gardens close by where, for the sum of one penny per hour, a croquet lawn may be engaged during the afternoon. Some of the wealthier residents have been known to spend as much as 5d. a day playing croquet here, and the lawn is said to be particularly popular with Scottish visitors, almost every other man whom you meet with a croquet-mallet in his hand wearing a long red beard and exclaiming "hoots!" at intervals throughout the day.

I cannot leave this end of the town without drawing attention to Lumps Fort, which overlooks the sea wall just here. It is (as the guidebooks tell us) of no special interest, historic or otherwise, which is really my chief reason for mentioning it.

We have now arrived at Portsmouth proper, and are at once faced by the magnificent Town Hall. A little further on we come to Heroes'

Corner, where a monument to Sir Charles Napier, Admiral of the Blue, is one of the features to which residents point with pride, and from which visitors turn away with a groan. After gazing at this extraordinary memorial for a few moments none will hesitate to deny that it is a unique example of English architectural art. Many will sincerely trust that it may long remain so.

No visitor to Portsmouth should fail to walk along the Commercial Road until he reaches No. 393, for it was here that Charles Dickens was born. (A cousin of mine named Jones was born in Swan Street just round the corner, but I myself claim the capital as my birthplace.)

Southsea is an easy town to get away from, and excursions are run daily to various places of interest in the neighbourhood. Tourists should not miss seeing Hayling Island, where the late Mr Clement Scott spent much of his time. "An ideal place," that famous critic called his bungalow there, "where the commoners used to march over our enclosed lawn to prove their right of way. If you really want rest and perfect peace," he adds, "I know of no place where you can get it handier than at Hayling." So, if your idea of rest and peace consists in having people walk over your lawn all day long, I can think of nothing pleasanter than to settle here in a spot which someone has rightly called "a little bit out of the common."

No. 3—EDINBURGH

EVERY true Scotsman, as Alexander Smith observed, believes Edinburgh to be the most picturesque city in the whole world. It is more beautifully situated than Athens; its historical interest is greater than that of either Manchester or Dinard; its hotel accommodation surpasses in comfort that of Aberdeen or Balham.

A thousand sad and stirring memories cling to the name of Caledonia's capital—"throned on crags," as Wordsworth once described it. A thousand phantoms of the past haunt the castellated battlements of "Auld Reekie," as Burns entitled it; a thousand stirring thoughts are evoked by a visit to the Grey Metropolis of the North, as I venture to call it.

Here Macbeth met Banquo's ghost; here David Rizzio's life-blood rendered the pavement eternally incarnadine; here Captain Porteous was hanged by the neck until he was dead; here the Laird of Dumbiedikes courted Jennie Deans; here I spent a long Sunday in Lent last year, stepping gingerly across my prone compatriots who had been celebrating the occasion in true Scottish fashion.

Those of my readers to whom the bang of the saxpence is a matter of little moment cannot possibly do better than spend their holidays in Edinburgh. For a comparatively small fee they can reserve a sleeping berth on any of the night expresses which start so punctually from our London termini, and by the time rosy-fingered dawn has begun to gild the eastern sky they will find themselves safely ensconced in a refreshment-room at the Caledonian or Waverley station, enjoying their first thoroughly Scottish meal of haggis, baps, bannocks, scones, mountain dew, and "Edinburgh Rock." In another half-hour they will be wending their way up Princes Street to the nearest jeweller, where they can purchase a tiara of cairngorms to send home to the wife whom they have left behind at Goole or Watford, or a jet bangle for the dear old mother who is spending a luxurious week-end with the master of some metropolitan workhouse.

There is one thing that always disappoints the visitor to Edinburgh, and that is the complete absence of kilts—or rather the absence of Scotsmen in kilts. If you meet a man wearing a kilt in the streets of the Queen City of the Forth it will be a grave mistake to suppose that he is the Laird of Gormuck or some other equally famous Highland chieftain. He is nothing of the sort. As a matter of fact his name is Hodgkins, and he is

employed during eleven months of the year licking up envelopes for the firm of Eisenstein & Ritzheimer on the shady side of Lothbury Avenue, E.C.

Mr Hodgkins has bought a cheap excursion ticket to the Scottish capital; he has borrowed a pair of tartan stockings, into which is thrust a jewelled fishslice; he has hired a kilt from Mr Willie Clarkson, of a shade which our only costumier has assured him to be appropriate to the atmosphere of the north; and he is now engaged in wearing it, wrong side before, in such a way that it discloses two snow-white and immaculate knees like alabaster piano-legs, and a pair of ankles of such emaciated exiguity as to threaten immediate fracture should any weight be suddenly placed upon them. On his head is a black tam o' shanter, adorned with an eagle's feather and a large brooch of coloured glass; and he has induced a friendly stationer in the Canongate to print for him a number of visiting cards on which is engraved the legend, "The Master of Gorbals, Castle Gorbals, Mull, N.B."

Another mistake which strangers are apt to make lies in supposing that the good people of Scotland talk Scotch. I shall never forget my surprise on the occasion of my first visit to Edinburgh when a policeman at the corner of Frederick Street, to whom I pleasantly remarked that it was

a "braw, bricht nicht the nicht, whateffer," told me to push off and stop being funny.

If you want to see Edinburgh at its best you should walk down Princes Street about six o'clock in the evening. This is the hour when the inhabitants come out in their thousands to take the air, braw laddies and sonsy lassies, wee bit bairns and douce callants, lairds and gudewives, havering and clavering, and wab-wabstering together. Losh! but 'tis a grand sight for sair een, I'll warrant!

Here you may observe the American summer girl buying a photograph of Arthur's Seat to send home to her beau in Wall Street. Here you may note the English spinster purchasing a souvenir spoon engraved with the arms of the city, or an earthenware porringer inscribed with some appropriate motto, to cheer the heart of her little nephew, Johnnie, at present studying dead or moribund languages in a Home for the Half-witted at Woking.

Cast your thoughts back a century or so, and in imagination you can see Susannah, the beautiful Lady Eglinton, and her seven lovely daughters processing to the Assembly Rooms in their sedan chairs. Here in the High Street is John Knox's house, to which admittance can be obtained for the modest sum of twelve bawbees. Here, too, is St Giles's Church where Jenny Geddes antici-

pated the drastic methods of the modern militant Suffragette.

The Old Tolbooth no longer stands where it did ; in fact, it no longer stands at all, having been demolished a hundred years ago last Friday ; but the Bank of England with its range of Corinthian pilasters, and the offices of *The Evening News* at the southern end of Waverley Bridge, still supply striking examples of what the human imagination can design and the human intellect achieve, and force one to agree with the great Scottish bard who so touchingly remarked :—

“ Och, snood the sporran roun’ ma lap.
The cairngorm clap in ilka cap ;
Och, hand me o’er
Ma lang claymore,
Twa bannocks an’ a bap,
Wha hoo !
Twa bannocks an’ a bap ! ”

No. 4—BLACKPOOL

OF all the seaside resorts which are dotted about with such profusion along the east coast of Lancashire there is none that appeals more strongly to the taste of the holiday-maker than does Blackpool. The promenade at Brighton may be wider and more stately, the niggers at Margate may expend more burnt cork upon their ears, the military bands of Folkestone may produce a more strident polyphony; but nowhere in the world are the sands so broad and clean, nowhere in the world are the receptacles for orange-peel so replete with potential marmalade, nowhere in the world is the air so bracing or the sunset so arresting as at Blackpool, the wonderland of the north. Hither on a public holiday do healthy, happy crowds of pilgrims flock, to blacken that golden stretch of sand which Father Neptune scours so lovingly twice a day. Hither does the tourist hasten from far and wide to enjoy the delights of what is probably the longest and most comfortable electric tram service in the United Kingdom.

Were I to attempt to describe at length the

various amusements which Nature and Man have combined to provide for the delectation of visitors to Blackpool, I do not suppose that a single volume would be large enough to contain one-half of my remarks. With three piers, three tramway services, a Great Wheel, a Tower (beside which Mr Eiffel's masterpiece looks like a molehill), an Alhambra, and a spacious Winter Garden at the disposal of all who have 6d. in their pocket, Blackpool can easily afford to look down with tolerant contempt at the ineffectual efforts of rival watering-places to lure away her hordes of delighted visitors. Her palaces of pleasure are designed upon a scale of such magnificence, her public buildings are so impressive in the grandeur of their architecture and the luxury and solidity of their decoration, that the bewildered stranger can only give a gasp of surprise as he enters the precincts of this fairy-land of delight, and wonder how it can be done at the price. Inexpensiveness is, indeed, the chief charm of Blackpool, visitors being the only things in the place that cannot ever be (or feel) at all "cheap."

A holiday crowd is always an exhilarating sight, and nowhere can it be enjoyed more thoroughly than in Blackpool, where the sands are always alive with human beings and the central pier is black with well-dressed individuals slowly revolving in couples to the so-called music of the local band.

"Merriment" is the motto of the city; fun without vulgarity; humour without horseplay; gaiety untouched by a suspicion of coarseness. Only last week some thoughtless person left upon the beach a copy of Mrs Eleanor Glyn's latest addition to English literature, and, though the tide refused to come in for quite a long time, when it eventually succeeded in overcoming its scruples, it rose 6 ft. in half an hour and bore the amorous publication out to sea, never to return.

I have already mentioned the Eiffel Tower which overlooks the little township, but my humble pen can never hope to do justice to the full beauty of this marvellous structure, nor to the variety and excellence of the entertainments which are supplied within its precincts.

On one side is the aquarium and menagerie, where the finny monsters of the deep (as well as quadrumanous mammals of the anthropoid variety) may be studied at close quarters, and where punctually at 3.30 p.m. every day the wild beasts are fed in the presence of a concourse of enchanted visitors. On another side is the Tower Circus, where elderly steeds canter demurely round the tan arena, while charming ladies in tights perform gymnastic wonders upon their broad backs and leap through paper hoops held up for them by the most humorous clowns that England

has produced since the tragic day when our one and only Marceline was lured away to New York.

No visitor to Blackpool should miss the ascent of the Tower. This can be accomplished comfortably and easily in a large elevator provided for the express purpose, and, when the summit of the building is reached, what a magnificent vista spreads itself beneath the astonishing gaze of the onlooker ! On a clear day the hills of North Wales can be distinctly seen from this eminence, while those of the Isle of Man could also be observed if they were not so far off.

The Alhambra is another of the sights of Blackpool. It is a veritable palace, with a staircase of solid Tarara marble, a restaurant surrounded by mirrors which enable the most sober to see themselves duplicated several times over, a spacious ballroom, and a roof-garden where performances of all kinds are given. Here one may listen to the discordant bleating of the budding baritone ; here some world-renowned conjuror will produce rabbits from the nape of one's neck or goldfish from one's trouser-pocket ; here a famous calculating horse, followed by some still more famous low comedian, will make one agree with Maeterlinck in thinking that the more one sees of one's fellow-man the more devoted does one become to one's dog. Here indeed the most blasé playgoer may

always be sure of finding something novel and *recherché* in the refined programme which is supplied at a purely nominal charge to the patrons of this temple of pleasure.

There are, however, a certain number of strangely constituted persons who prefer to spend their holidays in the open air. To these Blackpool offers special attractions. The Gulf Stream passes at their very door, warming the sea to such a pleasant temperature that many people who have studiously avoided water for years and years are induced to doff their clothing and disport themselves in the blue waves that slap the buttresses of the Victoria Pier.

Boating is another of the amusements of the place, and you will often see whole families of pleasure-seekers, disguised in billycock hats and black frock coats, ploughing their way through the foam in an open dinghey, at the imminent risk of their lives, with a total disregard for the rudiments of navigation, which can be partly accounted for by a natural ignorance of aquatics, and partly perhaps by the presence underneath the seat of a bottle of liquid which is certainly not lemonade.

But I hope I have said enough to prove that the Queen City of Lancashire is essentially the spot where a busy man may enjoy a few days' well-earned repose, and, though my stock of superlatives is

practically exhausted, I feel confident that I have more than deserved the silver casket containing the Freedom of the City, which the worthy Mayor of Blackpool will, I am sure, hasten ere long to confer upon me.¹

¹ Reginald Drake Biffin left the country before this presentation could be made, but there is still some idea of erecting an equestrian statue in his honour in the Winter Garden.—H. G.

No. 5—EASTBOURNE AND MARGATE

AS I am taking the unwarrantable liberty of including in this article an account of two separate watering-places under one single heading, I feel that perhaps I owe my readers some sort of explanation for this apparent eccentricity. The truth of the matter is that, in the course of my patient research after interesting statistics relating to the health resorts of England, I have got my facts a trifle mixed, and for the life of me I cannot remember whether it was at Eastbourne or at Margate that I spent a delightful week-end in the summer of 1897, and whether it was at Margate or at Eastbourne that I stayed for nearly a month during the dark days of 1900.

The two places do not resemble one another at all, as I am well aware. One of them is on the south coast and the other is not. (For the moment, I forget which one is not, though I think I know which is.) If, therefore, any of my subsequent remarks are obviously inapplicable to Eastbourne, my readers will understand that I am really referring to Margate; and if I say anything about Margate, which sounds as though it should have been said

of Eastbourne, the same rule will apply, only rather more so. My memory contains such vivid pictures of the two places that the reader's indulgence is craved if I fail to give a very clear representation of either.

Eastbourne (or Margate) may well be called the "Empress (or Queen) of Watering-places." No health resort has greater advantages in the shape of air and situation; none provides more liberally for the amusement of all classes of visitors. Next to the climate its accessibility is one of the greatest factors which tend to make it a universally popular rendezvous for the tourist. To reach Eastbourne (or Margate) from almost any corner of the United Kingdom, however distant, is within the range of all who have motor-cars at their disposal or the price of a third-class ticket in their pockets. Even the man who only possesses a stout pair of walking-boots and an indomitable spirit can make his way by road to Margate (or Eastbourne) with the certainty of arriving there sooner or later, if only he has courage enough to persevere. He will find a friendly workhouse door ever open to receive him and a pile of nice soft stones waiting to be disintegrated by his willing hand.

Good Americans when they die go to Paris, as we know. Good Englishmen who have no desire to die should most certainly go to Eastbourne (or Margate). The very low death-rate of the town is

one of its strongest recommendations. You are not allowed to die there, however much you may want to. Visitors who are suspected of moribund tendencies are heavily fined, and for a second offence are escorted to the city limits by the town band and a strong force of county police, and politely requested to defer their decease to a more appropriate occasion.

The local undertakers have long since put up their shutters and emigrated to townships where their services are better appreciated. Mark Twain even, when he visited the place some time ago, was forced to cease making futile arrangements for his funeral, and Mr Algernon Ashton's prolific pen can find no subject here for those necropolitan reflections which have always made his correspondence such cheerful after-dinner reading.

There is no lack of amusements at Eastgate, either in winter or summer. Special facilities are offered for shrimping, ping-pong, deep-sea bathing, and paddling. The Corporation officials supply towels at 1d. apiece to all who venture over their ankles into the sea, while in cases of emergency assistance is rendered (on payment of a small fee) to those who have come up for the third time after inhaling more than their fair share of the incoming tide.

Theatres and places of worship abound in Marbourne, and high-class bands are provided by

the local pier companies to play visitors to sleep on Sunday afternoons. On the piers, too, are numbers of slot machines whence for the modest sum of 1d. the stranger may obtain a cake of soap, a bottle of scent, a stick of chocolate, or a love letter of the most curious and intimate description. On the sands are refined troupes of pierrots and ventriloquists, while in the evenings the esplanade re-echoes with the howling of masked ladies, who drive round from street to street in a cart. The latter also contains an asthmatic piano and a male accompanist, whose whole time is occupied in preventing the sea breeze from turning over the leaves of his music before he has reached the bottom of the page.

Visitors who are fond of riding can hire horses from the local jobmasters and gallop over the downs for miles, with the sublime consciousness that, so long as they hold on to their hats with one hand and to the pommel of the saddle with the other, their sagacious steeds will eventually bring them back by the shortest and cheapest route to the stable door. Cyclists may push their wheels up the most precipitous hills in the neighbourhood, and inflate their tyres with the invigorating air of the district as often as they like without extra charge. The hotel accommodation too is excellent, that of Eastbourne being only equalled in luxury by that of Margate, while the lodging-houses of Margate

are only surpassed in comfort by those of Eastbourne.

Special efforts are made to cater to the wants of total abstainers, and there is an abundance of temperance hotels, where surreptitious ingurgitation is the last refuge of the toper, and liquid of an alcoholic character can only be obtained by private arrangement with the manager, or by bringing a bottle in with you in a bag.

If I were asked to recommend any particular boarding-house to a friend, I should certainly mention "The Nook" (the Misses Skipwash, proprietresses), just opposite the band stand, with a north aspect and an uninterrupted view of the fishmonger's establishment over the way, sheltered from south and west winds, replete with all the comforts of home, baths, h. and c., week-ends a speciality. Luckily my advice has not been applied for.

Margate (or Eastbourne) is an ideal place for the young of all ages. With the aid of a wooden spade and a tin pail the budding architect can be harmlessly employed for hours designing ingenious structures of sand, beside which the War Office buildings in Whitehall must pale their ineffectual fires, while persons who have successfully reached their second or third childhoods can make mud pies all day long without having their hands slapped.

I cannot close this article without some mention of the shrimps for which this coast is peculiarly famous. The shrimps of Eastbourne (or Margate) are pinker, fatter, and more luscious than those of any other seaside place in the world, from Tunbridge Wells upwards (or downwards, according as you dwell there or not). Their rich bouquet is unequalled, their flavour recalls the delicious flavour of fifty years ago; they are truly grateful and comforting, and well worth a guinea a bag. Try them in your bath. Pop one in the mouth at bedtime; place one beneath the tongue at dawn; keep one under the pillow in case you wake thirsty in the night. A Father of Twelve writes: "I never knew what happiness meant until I met your shrimps." Mr Gluckstein writes: "I have strongly recommended your shrimps to Mr Salmon." Mr Frank Richardson writes: "Your shrimps have the longest face-fittings I ever saw. Good for old man shrimp!" A pound of these magnificent crustacea weighs more than a pound of any other form of breakfast food, and goes just as far.

No. 6—THE PERFECT PLACE

I PURPOSE bringing this suggestive series of articles to a fitting close by describing what is, in my humble opinion, the best place in the world in which to spend the holidays. I discovered it myself some years ago, and though I have been carefully reticent upon the subject ever since, for fear of its becoming popular and overcrowded, a number of other equally diligent pleasure-seekers have somehow ferreted out my secret, and it seems unnecessary to keep silent upon the matter any longer.

The place to which I allude is particularly convenient to busy men like myself. The train service is excellent, the postal arrangements are admirable, the hotel accommodation is especially good. It is a picturesque old spot, full of romantic associations and pleasant historical memories, with an atmosphere all its own. The electric tramways are a constant subject of municipal self-congratulation, for, though they do not lead anywhere in particular, they are never overcrowded, and for the sum of one penny it is generally possible for the astute passenger to get a whole car to himself. It possesses an excellent museum and more than

one library, as well as a public hall and several theatres. The shops in the main thoroughfares compare favourably with those of other towns of the same size, and the half-penny stamps, which are retailed by short-tempered ladies across the counters of the post-office, taste just as good as the penny ones you get elsewhere.

There is unfortunately no sea-bathing here, but the corporation officials have thoughtfully provided a number of public swimming-baths for the use of residents and visitors, and in several of the streets are fountains and drinking troughs, where the passer-by may perform his modest ablutions or slake his raging thirst, free of charge.

An admirable military band plays in the public gardens every evening during the summer months, and for the sum of one penny per diem the true lover of music may purchase the exclusive rights in a hard green chair, whose iron back leaves an indelible impression upon the least susceptible sitter.

Sunday is a real day of rest here. The devout may spend a pleasant hour at the cathedral, where the singing of the local choir is really wonderful, and open-air services are held in the parks for the delectation of the more frivolous-minded, while mass meetings take place in one of the public squares for the especial benefit of the Unemployed and the apostles of Female Suffrage.

The time of the year when this place is perhaps to be seen at its best is August. Then is the air redolent of a quiet peace. Then are the streets deserted, the public gardens empty. No sound breaks the silence, save perhaps the occasional swish of a municipal water-cart, or the cry of a sheldrake calling to its mate across the ornamental water in the park. Here and there at the street corners decayed specimens of humanity are to be seen selling picture postcards to American tourists. Hiram T. Bloggs or Jawn P. Blight, wearing a very short jacket and very long hair (upon which is perched a cunning little Tuxedo hat), in company with his sister, his cousin, or his aunt, clad in a tight-fitting tailor-made costume and carrying the inevitable reticule, is engaged in "doing the sights" in record time. Here and there Miss Virginia Hayseed or old Uncle Tom Cobbley are to be observed inquiring of a good-natured policeman the way to the wax-works exhibition for which the locality is famous.

True, the climate is a trifle sultry, but, after ten months of Arctic cold, no Englishman can complain of a few weeks of comparatively warm weather, more especially in a town such as this where ice is sold everywhere at a low price by smiling Italian merchants, and can be enjoyed in the public street by anyone whose tongue is long enough to reach

the bottom of a wineglass without unduly straining his thorax.

The English summer has many compensating advantages. At this period of the year is held an exhibition of pictures in one of the public galleries which no true lover of art should miss seeing. Here may be noticed Mr Marcus Stone's most recent representation of maidenhood in distress, or giddy youth staking the family fortunes on the fall of a dice in an Elizabethan room, the carpet of which is thickly strewn with about twenty-seven packs of playing cards. Here, too, you may note the Hon. John Collier's latest and most cryptic contribution to this storehouse of modern art, while the crowded and colossal canvas upon which Mr Sigismund Goetze has depicted the last and most sensational offspring of his unfettered imagination flares side by side with the marvellous portraits of his lady friends which Mr Sargent paints with so masterly and merciless a hand.

There is, I repeat, no more perfect place than this in which to spend the holidays. Its death-rate is lower than that of any other town boasting the same number of inhabitants. It possesses all the glamour of Brighton without the glare of that brilliant watering-place. It is as populous as Blackpool without being so crowded. During August it is not very fashionable perhaps. But by dint of lowering all the blinds and making

exclusive use of the tradesmen's entrance as a means of ingress or egress, it is quite possible to conceal from curious friends the fact that one is living there at all.

I may be old-fashioned, prejudiced, what you will. But year by year the conviction is borne in upon me with more and more certainty that this is the only place where a man may live happily, comfortably, peacefully. For this reason, if for no other, I am determined that the summer of 1910 shall be no exception to my rule of securing the only true ideal holiday.

When the happy moment comes for me to enjoy a brief respite from the grinding labours of that precarious profession to which I am bound so fast and so irrevocably, the spot that I shall choose in which to spend my holidays will be, as usual, London.

Here, with my feet on the mantelpiece and my good dog, Fido, at my side, surrounded by cigarettes and syphons, I shall pass a blissful fortnight in the merry month of September, thinking sympathetically of many foolish friends who are ploughing their way through the Perthshire heather, wading knee-deep in the dripping turnips of Hertfordshire, and doing all those violent things which cannot be dissociated in the minds of Englishmen from the idea of holiday enjoyment. *Chacun à son goût* (everybody has gout sooner or later), as a

French savant once observed, and, while the hearts of my fellows may be fixed upon Margate, Strathpeffer, or Killarney, it is the grey metropolis of London that I must ever be loyal, fond, charmed, delighted, interested and eager, to, of, with, by, in, and for.

VII

THE DIARY OF A DILETTANTE



No. 1—SEPTEMBER

“CHATSWORTH,”
SLUMPINGTON-ON-SEA.

PEACE reigns supreme in the modest marine cottage which I have rented for the month of September, where I am privileged to entertain a select batch of wealthy but anæmic relatives whose society is calculated to repay cultivation by a poor younger son with no financial prospects.

A rich Anglo-Indian uncle, whose impending dissolution I await with cheerful resignation, is snoring in the most comfortable armchair in the smoking-room, grasping the one and only copy of the morning paper in a vice-like grip. Somewhere in the basement a door slams fitfully, but I am far too lazy to get up and close it. A smell of something being hyper-fried floats up from the kitchen, and suggests the imminence of yet another meal. I feel kindly disposed towards all men. I can forgive the members of my own family for the constant flow of home-truths with which they strive to render domestic life intolerable, and my intimate friends for the unkind things they say about me directly my back is turned. I am

conscious of the advent of a pleasant feeling of drowsiness, intensified by the murmur of a mowing machine which the gardener is manipulating with patient dexterity upon the front lawn.

If I had life over again (which Heaven forbid !) and could choose my profession, I think I would as soon be a gardener as anything else. To live, day after day, close to Nature, breathing the free air of heaven beneath the broad vault of the sky, hoeing croci, carefully planting bulbs the right way up, watering the stock, culling gooseberries (to be subsequently made a fool of by a buxom cook)—this is the form of labour that makes for sanity of mind and purity of soul.

Who ever heard of a serious crime being committed by a gardener ? The man who tends the infant pea within its tiny pod, or pinches the fuchsia till it pops from sheer delight, cannot be guilty of ignoble actions or ungentle thoughts.

Were I a fugitive from justice, a homicide seeking to elude the vigilance of the police, I should merely disguise myself as an under-gardener and cultivate a bed of mustard-and-cress over the spot where my victim lay safely buried. "I sometimes think that never blows so red the rose as where some buried Cæsar bled" ; but the minions of the law, as they partook of my unique mustard-and-cress sandwiches, washed down with copious draughts of home-brewn apple cider (made ex-

clusively from turnips), would never dream that beneath the ingenuous woollen waistcoat of plain Enery Shadbolt, under-gardener, beat the black heart of Jasper Grool, the Finchley murderer.

Criminals, as a rule, seem to don such utterly inappropriate disguises before revisiting the scenes of tragedies in which they have played too prominent a part. The famous Marden incendiary (as the files of *The Times* for June, 1847, clearly demonstrate) considered the adoption of a pair of crimson side-whiskers and a check mackintosh a sufficient precaution to baffle the sleuth-hounds of Scotland Yard. The Biggleside bigamist ineffectually disguised himself as a four-wheeler in his futile attempt to reach the Continent unobserved. If the Putney poisoner (who, unless my memory is at fault, slew his step-mother and her nine infant children on the anniversary of his wedding, thereby introducing a certain element of temporary gloom into what might otherwise have been a fairly festive occasion) had only been sensible enough to obtain a situation as seventh under-gardener to the Bishop of London, he might long have been spared to enrich the annals of our national crime.

Prevention, as several worthy persons have occasionally remarked, is better than cure, and if, in times of stress, we could be persuaded to adopt the profession of horticulture, we should find our-

selves less and less inclined to give way to homicidal tendencies when golfing with slow and tiresome partners, missing trains on Bank Holidays, playing bridge with tedious aunts, breaking down in motor omnibuses, or undergoing any of the many daily trials which rouse the worst passions that lie dormant in the human soul.

The cultivation of the soil conduces to gentleness, cheerfulness, and other passive virtues of a kindred nature which, as Stevenson rightly states, are above all morality. It is impossible to be really cross with a pansy, to tell a *risqué* story in the presence of a French bean, or to slap a red currant ; and the man who can speak harshly to a calceolarium would cheerfully rob his blind grandmother of her only set of false teeth, or pasture a goat upon his grandfather's grave. And if, as has been suggested, Adam was a gardener, and an apple the original source of all human discord, these are but the exceptions which make the truth of my theory all the more worthy of acceptance.

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I have just spent an arduous morning marking out a tennis-court upon the lawn, and am consequently covered with whitewash from head to foot. I anticipate several close sets of tennis to-morrow with the local champion, to whom I have despatched a modest challenge. The contest should be worth watching, presenting (as it will)

several peculiar and novel features usually absent from the game.

In the first place, there are no racquets in the house, and I have been forced to send across and borrow a pair from the Vicarage. The Dean's racquets are probably unique in their way. They are of the Early Victorian variety, with a Grecian bend at the shoulder and a rakish expression across the face, and were probably much admired in the days of crinolines and chignons. Long disuse has warped them in more than one direction, and their strings are so loose as to suggest the advisability of their being employed as landing-nets rather than as lawn-tennis racquets.

The absence of suitable balls is another difficulty with which I have had to contend. I had meant to order a box at the Stores, before leaving London, but in the hurry of departure this was forgotten. At present there are only four balls in the house, and none of them is particularly suitable for the purposes of lawn-tennis. One is made of a transparent celluloid material of a light pinkish colour, and apparently contains dried peas which cause it to rattle pleasantly when shaken. This I stole from the nursery, during the temporary absence of a small niece. I managed to abstract another—a hard india-rubber ball, heavily punctured—from my aunt's favourite dachshund, who is at this moment audibly lamenting his loss in the coal-

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cellar where I have temporarily confined him. The third ball I found in the best bed-room. It looks exactly like a cricket-ball, but is in reality an inkpot. I do not mean to use this until I have exhausted all other legitimate means of defeating my opponent. The fact that the lid of the inkpot is liable to open suddenly in mid-air adds a new terror to my American service, and should, if necessary, enable me to hold my own successfully against the local tennis champion. If this fails I have yet another ball in reserve. It is a small but heavy glass globe, containing a life-like representation of a real snow-storm, it being only necessary to invert the sphere to produce the effect of a miniature elemental disturbance.

My new cream-coloured bathing-suit—a very fashionable affair, with magenta insertions—quite the *dernier cri de Cromer*—is drying on the window-sill. Outside upon the sea-shore, the curlews call plaintively to their mates, while bathing-machine attendants hopefully search for hidden treasure in the pockets of such customers as are disporting themselves with the playful agility of porpoises in what poets have from time immemorial referred to as “the briny.” “Thalassa!” I am impelled to remark, as did Archimedes of old, when he sat so suddenly in a cold bath (prepared for him by a tactful friend) that the water overflowed and ruined

the kitchen ceiling, thereby providing the earliest example of what scientists term "capillary attraction." "Thalassa!"

I caught my first shrimp yesterday, and must confess to a natural feeling of elation, though I pray that I am not unduly puffed up by this early success in the chase. Mine has hitherto been an uneventful life, at least in so far as the world of sport is concerned. I am not one of those who habitually spend the winter in the Andes, spearing wombats, who pursue the Caribbean cariboes in rubber tennis-shoes across the steppes of Central Asia, who creep up unsuspected (in night-socks) behind the hairy musk-ox of Arabia, or poke the portly possum from his bunk beneath the floor of some Altantic cavern. My joys are of a simpler sort. To catch a shrimp, or maybe, a prawn; to impale the elusive winkle upon the business end of a gilt safety-pin; to paint the legs of the piano with Aspinall's enamel; to play the autoharp—these are the Arts of Peace (to quote Mr Alfred Austin) with which I am most intimately acquainted.

The mention of the autoharp reminds me of the great American statesman-philosopher's lines upon the subject of this exquisite little instrument—lines written in the autumn of his days, when (during lucid intervals) he was still allowed out without a collar and chain.

"O once" (wrote the poet, with a wealth of simple pathos which I venture to consider inimitable)—

"O once my nails were long and keen,
And I could play the mandoline ;
But now my nails are short (tho' sharp),
And so I play the autoharp."

There is, to my mind, something wonderfully moving in this patient acceptance by the doting bard of the inevitable ravages of senility. No word of complaint, mark you ; merely a touch of resignation in that fine last line, which (I take leave to say) ranks with that sublime effort of Lord Tennyson's about Mr Wilkinson, the clergyman, as one of the jewels six words long that sparkle on the forefather of Time—or whatever it is—

"And so I play the autoharp."

To return to the shrimp. I am having this Monarch of the Beach stuffed by a local naturalist, and intend to hang it up in a conspicuous position on the wall of my library in London. I must admit that I do not altogether approve of the habit of keeping trophies of the chase, so to speak, in perpetual cold storage. A stuffed capercailzie, fixed in an expensive glass case in the smoking-room, is (to my mind) as distinct an eyesore as "the cigarette of a half-smoked Empress," which one of Mr Pinero's best-known characters keeps upon his

dressing-table. I cannot believe that a man who willingly inhabits a room which contains an embalmed salmon can have an immortal soul, and I always shudder involuntarily whenever I pass the house of a friend in whose front hall stands a moulting ourang-outang carrying a tray in one hand and an umbrella-stand in the other.

But a shrimp is not a tarpon. It takes up very little room, does not offend the sensitive eye of the guest, and never moults. So I am having my little friend set up in a life-like position, standing on the edge of a seascape and gazing, with a look of illimitable scorn, at the scene of mixed bathing which constitutes the background of the picture. An artistic friend to whom I showed this *chef d'œuvre* remarked that he had never seen anything like it, which is high praise from a man who was once so intimate with Whistler that the latter habitually called him a liar.

Talking about shrimps, I wonder why it is so easy to sing in one's bath. My matutinal ablutions are always accompanied by powerful bursts of happy song. These used to cause a panic in the household, but are now accepted as inevitable, if not actually enjoyed, by those whose good fortune it is to share the shelter of my roof. There is a richness of tone about the notes which I produce under these abnormal conditions unlike anything that can be attained upon the ordinary concert

platform. I emit sounds which would make Caruso green with envy and Melba jealous, if such a thing were possible. Whether it is that the acoustic properties of the bathroom are particularly favourable, or merely that my vocal efforts are attended by unusual success under water, I cannot tell. All I know is that whenever my bath re-echoes to the sound of such ballads, "Pink feet I bathed beside the Shalimar" or "O dry those ears" (in B flat), domestics come running from the uttermost parts of the basement, under the deluded impression that I have turned on the hot water and am unable to turn it off again.

There is, as some original thinker has remarked, a time for everything, and as with me the morning bath is the occasion for song, so is the morning shave the moment when I can give the most life-like impersonations of famous actors. As I stand, razor in hand, before my looking-glass of a morning, I always make a point of reciting in a loud voice such fragments of serious verse as have not yet escaped my memory. In doing this I unconsciously adopt the mannerisms of the better-known among our actor-managers. My make-up as Mr George Alexander is so life-like that one of the housemaids, whose eye happened to impinge upon the keyhole at the very moment of my impersonation, and who has always been what Mr Hall Caine calls a "moderate drinker," gave

warning on the spot, and has since taken the pledge.

Later on in the day, when the sun is high in the heavens, I occasionally attempt to amuse my friends by a repetition of these early triumphs, but without success. All my imitations of popular mummers, from Mr Harry Lauder to Mr Henry Ainley, develop a tedious similarity which is puzzling to the onlookers. Friends find the greatest difficulty in guessing from my facial contortions and vocal peculiarities whether I am mimicking Mr Lewis Waller in a Franco-British part, or merely giving a representation of Sir Herbert Tree wrestling with the overworked prompter of His Majesty's.

Sounds as of a porcupine in distress reach me from the smoking-room as I write, and suggest the possibility of my being able to wrest the daily paper from my uncle during one of those brief intervals of wakefulness which punctuate his lengthy periods of post-prandial coma. I must, at any rate, make the attempt before he resumes that stertorous breathing which has long made his slumbers a byword in every club in the metropolis.

No. 2—OCTOBER

CASTLE GORMUCK, N.B.

MY heart's in the Highlands pursuing the soft roe! I am engaged in paying what the Society columns of the Press term a "round of visits in the North." My present host, Lord Strathbungo and Gorbals—dear old Bungles, as I always call him (when he isn't there)—is one of the most hospitable of men. His house is, as he felicitously describes it, Liberty Hall; and if his guests want to smoke they can go out into the greenhouse. "When Greek meets Greek, do as the Romans do," is a well-worn proverb of which I heartily approve, and in order to conform to the habits and traditions of this Highland household I go so far as to don the national costume as often as possible. In this I am only following the advice of that great Scottish bard, whose works have already become classics, and who, in a haunting passage which constantly recurs in his well-known volume of *Juvenilia*, exclaims :—

"Wear kilts, and tho' men look askance,
Go out and give your knees a chance!"

An exhibition of Highland "games" took place yesterday in the park, such typically Gaelic feats as tossing the caber, butting the bap, ilking the pibroch, and weirding the dree (for single gentlemen) being performed with grace and skill by a large number of freckled competitors with Merry-weather hair. I did not myself take any active part in the games, but sat in the grand stand and talked Scotch (and soda) to a local chieftain, the Gormuck of Gormuck, who was so impressed by my conversation that he shook me warmly by the nape of the neck at parting, and called me a "feckless Sassenach loon," which I take to be a term of endearment among Highlanders. I retorted by telling him that I had never met such a dour and sonsy wee bannock, and eblins I wudna munna, which was (I flatter myself) a masterpiece of impromptu dialect. I also thanked him for speir-ing (whatever that may mean), and we parted in great good humour, promising to toss many a caber together at an early opportunity. This is indeed a grand country, worthy to inspire those literary comets of the Kaillyard variety, which (as has been wisely remarked) go up like a Crockett and come down like a Stickit.

My host, Lord Strathbungo and Gorbals, is a Laird of ferocious aspect, but a rigid vegetarian, with a heart as warm as the hue of his whiskers, and I am happy to have the privilege of enjoying

the shelter of his hospitable roof-tree. Castle Gormuck is a typically Scottish house—by which I mean that guests are compelled to eat their porridge in a vertical position at breakfast, and that twelve pipers march round the table at dinner and render coherent conversation or even consecutive thought utterly impossible.

To-day being Sunday, the blinds have been drawn down during most of the forenoon, and Lord Strathbungo is at this moment engaged in reading aloud to the assembled members of his household from a volume of sermons (by a famous prelate), entitled *Glimpses into the Obvious*. I have escaped this performance, on the plea of a headache, letters to write, indigestion, and unorthodox theological views, and am sitting upstairs in my bedroom praying for Monday.

The Sabbath in Scotland seems to be a more than usually depressing day, except (I suppose) to the few rich people who manufacture whisky and the many poor ones who drink it immoderately. We are not allowed to play games of any kind, or even the piano, and the Strathbungo butler, who must have overheard me whistling a portion of Handel's *Largo* in my bath, has looked at me reproachfully ever since and declined to give me a second dose of haggis at breakfast. This afternoon, if I am very good, I am to be taken for a Sunday

walk—of all institutions the most deadly—and shall be shown the tree planted last year by the Prime Minister (and subsequently re-planted by the head-gardener), the picturesque Falls of Gormuck (with the usual "Lover's Leap"), and the spot in the warren where a foreign Archduke shot at a rabbit and wounded four infant ducks and the old lady who was feeding them.

If only I were allowed to play golf! And yet, on second thoughts, I am glad to have a day's respite from the thralldom of this maddening game. As a golfer I do not ask for much. I do not seek that invaluable faculty for keeping one eye on the hole and the other on the ball, commonly called "swivel-opia." I only wish to be able to make a certainty of hitting the ball off the tee, of getting on the green in eight, and holing out in less than six more. Were this granted, I should be a comparatively happy man, content to stay at home for the rest of my natural life, "putting" holes in the drawing-room carpet, committing agricultural outrages upon the lawn with a niblick, living the simple, strenuous existence which is the lot of the habitual golfer, and rejoicing whenever my ball eluded the deadly "rough" or described a harmless parabola over the yawning bunker.

is the difficulty of adequately entertaining or being adequately entertained. In a copy of one of our brightest halfpenny papers which I found in the smoking-room yesterday, I came across an article suggesting a number of new pastimes peculiarly suitable for the long summer evenings. I cut it out to show to Lady Strathbungo, but must reserve this for Monday. Among the games which struck me as most likely to cause pleasure to a country-house party the most attractive is undoubtedly the Frog Race. All that is required for this particular amusement is a few wheelbarrows and a lot of frogs. Wheelbarrows can always be borrowed from the under-gardener, if he has not gone home to his dinner, and frogs may either be found in damp places or purchased at a purely nominal price from any respectable frog merchant in St Martin's Lane.

The procedure of the game is as follows :—The ladies of the party are lined up in a row, each of them being provided with a wheelbarrow containing four or five frogs. At a preconcerted signal the barrow-pushers race to a given point, and the one who on arrival is found to be in possession of the largest number of frogs is given a prize. As the writer of the article points out, the frogs will naturally begin to feel uneasy when the barrows start moving, and endeavour to escape by leaping out over the side or front, when they will perhaps

be squashed under the wheels in a most comic way, or trodden on by some fair athlete with a foot like a pontoon. (And, by the by, the frogs must reach the winning-post *inside* the barrow. It is not permissible for a lady to bring one or more in upon her heel.) One can readily imagine the laughter that will be caused by such a sport as this, which is certainly one of the most amusing pastimes I have ever heard of. It is not, perhaps, so amusing for the frogs as for the onlookers; but one cannot hope to please everybody.

Another way of spending a pleasant afternoon (so I read) is by playing a glorified form of Blind Man's Buff, in which all the guests are led out into the garden and blindfolded, with the exception of one fortunate person, who is allowed to retain his powers of vision. The object of the game is, of course, to catch this individual, who should have no sort of difficulty in eluding his would-be captors. By the time old Lady Jones has walked blindly into the nearest monkey-puzzle for the third time since luncheon, and both the Misses Brown have been caught by their fringe-nets in a pergola (like Absalom), and Uncle William has fallen into the fountain and got his pockets full of gold-fish, the full humour of the game will begin to dawn upon the delighted players. They will be still more amused when, after an hour's fruitless

search, they discover the object of their quest (who has by this time completely forgotten all about his duty to his captors) safely ensconced in the smoking-room reading the *Sporting Times*.

England is supposed to be the home of sport, but as the inventors of original methods of entertainment Englishmen must certainly yield the palm to their American cousins. Americans seem to possess a talent for entertaining their friends in a novel and original fashion, which must fill the breast of every Britisher with envy and despair. The scourge of an infectious disease cannot wholly suppress their ardour; their hospitality is proof against the hideous fumes of carbolic. A fortnight ago, so I read in the Paris edition of the *New York Herald*, a well-known Pittsburg lady, who had contracted whooping-cough from her infant son, gave a "lawn fête" to all those of her friends who were fortunate enough to be suffering from the same illness. The party was a huge success, and went with a whoop from start to finish. The kindly hostess had provided a buffet at which her guests might occasionally obtain plates of lozenges and cream, or a timely drink of creosote and Perrier. "Come and have a gargle!" was the favourite invitation to the refreshment-room, and "Whooping the Whoop" was a pastime indulged in by a large number of ailing guests, among

whom I was glad to notice Mr Whooper of *The Times*.

An old aunt of mine who is laid up with German measles at Balham, is seriously thinking of emulating the methods of the Pittsburg hostess by giving a *conversazione* at which her list of guests shall be restricted to sufferers from this tiresome Teutonic complaint. Prizes will be presented by Lord Lonsdale to those who have the greatest number of measles, and a German band will be on the spot to play appropriate music.

Mr Eustace Miles would appear to be the only Englishman who can rise to the occasion by inventing novel pastimes. His latest discovery is a new form of outdoor sport which he entitles "Football Fives." This game consists in kicking a soft ball against a hard wall, and thus (as its name suggests) combines the chief characteristics of two of England's favourite pastimes, football and fives. Should this pastime find acceptance in our English homes, there is no earthly reason why others of a similar hybrid variety, founded upon the same principles, should not gain equal popularity.

"Golf-billiards," which can be played successfully and satisfactorily by two or more persons, is an enthralling game for the long winter evenings. It bears a strong resemblance to

"pool," and consists in substituting a niblick for the customary cue, and covering the billiard-table with improvised bunkers in the shape of coal-scuttles, valuable vases, objets d'art, bric-a-brac, Tanagra figures, etc. (according to the tastes and means of the players). The ordinary rules of golf should be observed, and care should be taken to replace the turf whenever necessary. The club must never be "grounded" in a bunker, whether the latter be an inkstand or merely a bust of Marie Antoinette or Corelli, but, should the ball leave the table in the course of play, it is permissible to drop another without losing a stroke. This game is likely to become fashionable at many country-house parties next winter, and appeals especially to the young of all ages. To be properly played it is almost a *sine qua non* that one's host and hostess should be absent from the billiard-room, as their presence at a moment when the ball is impinging with fatal effect upon some priceless vase does not make for that unruffled calm which is so necessary in a sport where the combined accuracy of hand and eye is a matter of such moment.

I dare say I have not explained the intricacies of this absorbing game as lucidly as I could wish. It looks extremely complicated on paper, and requires to be played before its full beauties become apparent. But I have no doubt that it will shortly

be introduced into those merry English homes where united families will soon be sitting round the yule-log gloomily wondering how to pass the long evenings in the least boring manner possible.

Other games, such as ping-pong-hockey, shove-ha'penny-quoits, bridge-cricket, croquet-lacrosse, puss-in-the-corner-bezique, etc., can be arranged on the same principles, and will doubtless suggest themselves to all who are blessed (or cursed) with the gift of imagination. I would gladly describe a game for which I am thinking of taking out a patent, and which combines the thrilling interest of blindman's buff, the piquancy of pelota, the fascination of "musical chairs," and the boisterous excitement of spillikins; but I am not in the mood for further reflections of this sort.

I am, indeed, writing this under difficulties. The spiritual moanings of the Laird float up from the dining-room, almost persuading me to become a Buddhist, a Theodolite, an Acrostic—anything unorthodox, in fact—while in the kennels adjoining the kitchen-garden a large number of highly-trained sporting dogs are raising their voices in eloquent protest against the law which deprives them every seventh day of the exercise which is so necessary to their happiness. Would that I could silence them in the drastic fashion employed towards

garrulous parents by our businesslike cousins across the Atlantic. I refer, of course, to the notorious instance of the man of Chicago named Young, who one day, when his nerves were unstrung, put his mother (unseen) in the chopping machine, and canned her and labelled her "Tongue."

No. 3—NOVEMBER

BELLINGER HALL, NORFOLK.

WITH advancing years, I am gradually becoming more and more fastidious, less easy to please, more hypercritical of the amusements provided for me. I am no longer content to walk for five hours at a stretch across boundless marshes on the chance of bagging a few snipe. I decline to stand all day long in a half-frozen condition behind a hedge, awaiting the unlikely advent of partridges that exist only in the imagination of an optimistic head-keeper. The mere slaughter of innumerable pheasants no longer satisfies my soul, unless every bird can be induced to soar high above the tree-tops and offer a really difficult target to the guns that stand in the valley below.

There are a few simple persons who have reached years of so-called discretion and can still pretend that to tramp laboriously across the knee-deep heather, watching other people's dogs work, and occasionally bombarding a fat old grouse that rises at their feet, is infinitely preferable to sitting comfortably in a "butt," with a second gun at their

elbow, and the certainty that each bird that whistles over their heads will demand that combined celerity of eye and hand which alone makes shooting a source of supreme delight to the modern sportsman. There are still some misguided individuals abroad who would trudge with fumbling footsteps across acres of blind potatoes, mowing down the confiding "Frenchman" that crosses their path—and subsequently taking a quarter of an hour to find his carcass—sooner than experience the joy of bagging a "right-and-left" from a covey of partridges sailing with the suddenness and speed of the swallow over the corner of the chalkpit in which the gun is sitting on his shooting-stick, with his loader a yard behind him and his faithful retriever at his feet. These old-fashioned survivors of a bygone age, when the enjoyment of sport appears to have been measured by the amount of trouble and exertion expended in the acquisition of a bag, are fast dying out. They have given place to the modern epicure, whose zeal in the pursuit of game is tempered by a strong disinclination for any very violent form of physical exercise.

We are no longer tolerant of indifferent sport, and the host who cannot provide "high" birds (and plenty of them) finds an increasing difficulty in getting an adequate number of guns for his annual shooting-parties. It is not enough, how-

ever, to supply good "sport." In this sybaritic age we think twice before accepting an invitation to shoot with a friend, however well-stocked his coverts may be, however many Hungarian partridges he may have turned out, unless we can be assured of the congenial society, good cooking, comfortable bedrooms (provided with writing-tables) and the company of kindred spirits. The terror of being bored is always present; the fear of being uncomfortable is strong upon us. We remember hideous weeks spent with worthy "county people" who gave us excellent covert shooting—and nothing else; whose bedrooms were deficient of bells, whose house-parties were as dull as the proverbial ditchwater, of which, indeed, their cellars were a perpetual reminder; and we register a vow that never again will we accept an invitation to shoot, unless we know exactly what to expect in the shape of society and creature comforts. Half the pleasure of a day's shooting consists in the companionship of one's fellow-guns; the failure of these to prove congenial can only be compensated for by an abnormal show of birds and an extraordinary outlay of ammunition.

Bellinger Hall is a house to which I journey, year after year, conscious that I shall find nothing but disappointment in the society of my fellow-guests, but too weak-minded to decline an invita-

tion which ensures a couple of days of the best partridge-driving in Norfolk.

Old Lord Orpington is my host, and his team of guns is almost invariably the same every autumn. He is a silent, inexorable widower, with a passion for discussing bucolic problems, such as the rotation of crops, the afforestation of waste lands, or the effect of the wire-worm upon hops—topics in which I am profoundly uninterested, and which produce an acute form of agricultural depression in the minds of his other guests.

Against the sombre background of my host's lugubrious personality stands out the figure of Charlie Somers, who may justly be called the buffoon of the party. Charlie is a clean-shaven young man, with fair hair, brushed back over his head with a certain feminine grace that captivates the heart of the weaker sex. He should undoubtedly have been an actor, but drifted into some architect's office in early life, and has never had the strength of mind to drift out again. He is more elaborately costumed than any man has ever been before: his clothes are a study in themselves, and must cause him endless trouble and thought. He has the dramatic instinct for "dressing the part," but is rather apt to overdo it, so that out shooting he has the appearance of a Spanish brigand who has escaped from some provincial theatrical company touring with *Carmen*. His rakish Homburg hat,

with a jay's wing fastened jauntily at the back, is a perfect dream; his high cowboy boots, which lace all the way up the side, are worth going miles to see. He is an amusing person, nevertheless, and spends most of his time seriously questioning our host as to the habits of the guano, and giving way to *facetiae* of a kindred character; but he does not contribute largely to the day's bag. He chooses the moment when the guns are waiting at the beginning of a drive to be irresistibly funny; goes down elaborately on all-fours to stalk a sparrow that has settled in the hedge in front of him; expresses comic terror at the sight of a rabbit; and is generally "presenting arms" or going through other military evolutions with his gun, just as a large covey of partridges flies over his head and reminds him that he has omitted to load what he is pleased to call his "bundook."

Sir Andrew Garskin is another member of the party. This distinguished lawyer has committed the indiscretion of taking up shooting late in life. He consequently combines the inexperience and enthusiasm of extreme youth with a complete ignorance of the proper methods of handling lethal weapons—a fact which makes him a singularly undesirable neighbour. He invariably carries his gun at full-cock in the hollow of his elbow, so that he cannot turn round without pointing the muzzle at the chest of some friend—whose

friendship, by the by, is sorely tried by such a performance.

Colonel Verney, a brother-guest, is a man whom one could never mistake for anything but a colonel. Whatever profession he had chosen to enter he would still have been a typical colonel. One can never meet him without expecting to hear him shout, "Gad, sir! the Service is going to the dogs!"—an expectation that is usually justified. He has that hectic, robustious, swashbuckling air about him which a career in the Indian army stamps upon those who have served their country in torrid zones and left their tempers in Bengal. He is a first-class shot, however, and, except for the tropical vocabulary which he exercises upon any unfortunate dog who is so misguided as to be unable to find one of his "runners," is distinctly a useful addition to the team.

Lord Mallowfield is probably the most conspicuous figure of the whole party. Tall, good-looking, middle-aged, his reputation as a shot and as a sportsman is assured. He is generally followed by a small retinue of attendants; two loaders—his lordship never shoots with less than three guns—a man with a couple of retrievers on a leash, and another individual bearing a shooting-seat and a waterproof cape. The great secret of Lord Mallowfield's success as a shot is that he manages to fire his gun more quickly than his rivals; while they are

thinking, or picking out a bird, he has already discharged his fowling-piece several times. He almost always fires two barrels at a covey as it approaches, and then gets his second gun in at them as they pass over his head. The average number of birds killed by him is very large; the average number picked up is even larger. He does not trouble to count his dead as they fall. He merely counts the cartridges that he has expended, takes a percentage—a generous one, be it said at once,—for hits, and directs his dog-man to find the resulting number of corpses. This the dog-man does immediately, to the great annoyance of the guns on either side of Lord Mallowfield, who see their slain being gathered in a heap round his lordship's shooting-stick till they lie as thick as thieves on Vallombrosa. It is certainly irritating when the gun next door to you declares that he has twenty-five partridges down, and you know that you yourself have fifteen, and his dog picks up the twenty-five most obvious birds in the vicinity and leaves you (dogless) to hunt the furrows and hedges for your modest bag. You cannot help feeling that of the seven or eight which you fail to find, at least three or four belong to him, and of the score that he has found so easily, at least five belong to you. This is the occasion for a display of resignation, patience, self-control and the other Christian

virtues. Pray Heaven that you may not fail at such a moment !

The remaining two guns (not, of course, including myself) may be well described as the optimist and the pessimist of the party. The pessimist is Mr Walters, a member of Parliament and a neighbour of Lord Orpington's, who drives over to the meeting-place each morning in his dogcart, and waits shivering at the roadside for twenty minutes until the other guns arrive in the family brake. He is a melancholy person, who wears upon his watch-chain a small dial—technically known, I believe, as a "liar"—upon which he registers every head of game that falls to his gun. At the end of each drive he informs the world at large that he simply can't hit a haystack, that the sun was in his eyes, that his gunmaker has sent him rotten cartridges which won't shoot straight, that his loader never warns him of the approach of a covey till too late, that he intends giving up shooting altogether and taking to golf instead, and so on. It is as well to add, however, that the record of his "liar" does not altogether tally with the gloomy account he gives of his lack of prowess, and that at luncheon-time, when he is fortified and exhilarated by a glass or two of cherry-brandy, the share of the morning's bag to which he lays claim is by no means a modest one. I have often longed to show him the futility, the fatuity, of taking this openly

despondent view of his own performances. If you are perpetually telling people that you can't shoot, they will gradually learn to share your opinion; whereas, if you say nothing at all about it, they will never find out the secret of your unsuccess, or, if they do observe you missing a number of easy shots, will benevolently attribute your failure to the fact of your being temporarily out of form.

The optimist, who is incidentally a commander in the Royal Navy, realises this, and never gives up hope. So long as he discharges his gun, he argues, there is always a chance of something falling a victim to his prowess; every bullet has its billet, and while the air is filled with shot there is danger for animal life. When a drive is over, and the keepers come forward to gather up the spoils, you will always hear this cheerful hedonist calling passionately for a dog to come and retrieve the imaginary corpses of partridges at which he has fired, but which long ago escaped into the next county. If you ask him how many birds he has shot, he will at once say, "Oh, about ten—counting four runners and one brute that was badly hit and went over the horizon to die in peace, and another that I didn't actually see down but was simply riddled with pellets and can't possibly live." He has acquired a fortunate knack of shooting birds simultaneously with some other gun—or, better still, just after they have been killed

stone dead and are falling through the air—when he magnanimously suggests that he should “ halve ” them with his neighbour.

Of my host, Lord Orpington, I will say little, since it is ill work criticising the hand that feeds one. He is an exceptionally good shot, though somewhat inclined to give tongue to a jealous “ Hi! Hi!” whenever some other gun dares to shoot at any bird that flies within a radius of fifty yards of his shooting-stick. When the hour of luncheon arrives he invariably makes a practice of saying that “ This is by no means the least enjoyable part of the day’s work,” and I am not sure that he isn’t right.

But, after all, can anything be pleasanter or more enjoyable than a good day’s partridge driving, under perfect conditions, in ideal autumn weather, with a fine show of strong birds, a light wind to make them fly, no sun to provide the unworthy with an excuse for indifferent marksmanship, and a party of old and trusted friends to share the sport? I trow not.

Give me to the sport I love !
One stout hedge to hide me,
Coveys high in heav’n above,
Gun full-cock beside me !
Cartridge charged with swift “ E.C.” ;
Loader keen and clever ;
That’s the sport for a man like me,
That’s the sport for ever !

No. 4—DECEMBER

THE ATTIC, WESTMINSTER,
Christmas Day.

LONDON is a deserted city, but I do not complain. To my mind the metropolis is never so delightful as when absolutely empty, and it is seldom so empty as upon Christmas Day.

I am sitting writing in front of a huge wood fire, with the curtains tightly drawn, with a dachshund asleep on my knee, a large cigar firmly fixed in the corner of my mouth, and at my side a long glass. This, in my opinion, is the best way of spending Christmas. As I snuggle deep in the cushions of my armchair, I picture to myself the rest of the world enjoying their Yuletide festivities in more boisterous fashion, realising, perhaps, as they play blind-man's-buff with the children or attempt to decorate the nursery picture-frames with holly, the truth of Talleyrand's remark that life would be tolerable but for its pleasures.

It is only by dint of carefully perusing the budget of "Christmas Numbers" which lie in such gaudy profusion upon my desk that I am enabled to

realise the curious manner in which other people are celebrating an anniversary which seems to recur with alarming frequency as the years draw on.

The illustrations in our weekly journals at this season must always be a source of profound wonder to the lover of art. There is a certain sameness about the subject chosen, a fluent obviosity about the title, a smooth inadequacy in the treatment, that command our interest if not our respect. Grandfather is always depicted as playing "Puss-in-the-Corner"—a type of pastime in which no self-respecting grandparent would dream of indulging. Aunt Tabitha remains glued to that portion of the staircase which exactly underlies the swinging bunch of mistletoe. On her face is an expression of rapt but seemly joy, as of one who awaits the advent of some amorous curate. As a matter of fact we all know quite well that mistletoe is no longer set as a trap for the unwary; nor is the curate still fashionable as a butt for the humorist or a prey for the maiden aunt; but at Christmas we accept these fables as seasonable conventions of a cheerfully harmless description.

From the illustrations of the Christmas artist one would gather that the pastime most popular in our English country houses at this time of the year is that of "Bringing home the Yule-log." Personally I cannot believe this to be the case. I cannot bring myself to imagine that there is,

or ever was, such a thing as a Yule-log, or that, if it existed, there could be any possible advantage in bringing it home. Yet no Christmas Number is considered complete unless it includes an illustration introducing the reader to this well-worn subject. The scene consists, as a rule, of a dreary waste of country-side. Snow is falling in large stage lumps. Three, well-dressed and apparently happy children are lightly dragging half an oak-tree, about twelve feet long by three feet thick, astride of which sits the youngest member of the family with his arms full of holly and a bright smile upon his face. Comely cousins with white teeth and sable muffs, and typically British uncles with eye-glasses, fur-coats and patent leather boots, encourage the little ones from a safe distance. A lighted church on the horizon completes the picture.

All this is very pretty and very nice, but it bears no relation whatever to actual fact. Yule-logs are no longer brought home in this way, if indeed they ever were. Anyone who has attempted to drag even a three-foot log across the snow with a piece of thin string will realise that it is no laughing matter. To carry a supply of holly in one's arms is a task which demands all that a man has of fortitude and dexterity ; only gardeners can do it, and from them such a feat provokes no smile save that of an early Christian martyr. Yet, for the

sake of the Christmas Numbers, these and similar fallacies are cherished and kept alive.

In another picture we are shown further festivities, of an equally unreal nature. The children are playing " Hunt the Slipper " while their elders sit round watching and occasionally assisting with supreme unselfishness at their harmless revels. As we are all perfectly well aware, what actually happens on such occasions is altogether different. Someone suggests that the little ones would like to dance. The room is cleared. A kindly aunt sits down to the pianola and jerkily grinds out some classical tune to which nothing but a funeral slow-march could possibly be performed. The "grown-ups" start the ball rolling by selecting partners from among their own contemporaries. The children very quickly realise that they are in the way, and retire to the smoking-room to play bridge. Their elders and betters continue to dance with enthusiasm for an hour or two until the kindly aunt, who has by this time bicycled about fifteen miles on the pianola, collapses. Sympathetic friends chafe her hands with holly until she revives. Then, and not till then, is the absence of the little ones noticed and deplored. The wise-acres shake their heads and say that times have changed since they were young—which is more than probable—and the indignant "grown-ups" finish the evening with a game of " Hide and Seek."

We like to pretend that Christmas is entirely a time for the young, but in our hearts we know that it is not so. And the same may be said of Christmas presents. I have a small friend, aged about four, to whom I am devoted. Every year I give him a box of bricks, a toy train, and a battalion of tin soldiers. Three days afterwards I pay a polite visit, to see how he is enjoying my gifts. His mother is sitting on the floor of the drawing-room, building the most elaborate castles with the bricks. She can hardly tear herself away sufficiently long to pour me out the cup of tea which common courtesy demands. The child's father has left the article which he was writing for the *National Review* on "The Evils of Temperance," and is busy laying the parquet floor with tin rails to enable the toy train to complete the circuit of his study. Over in the window-seat a young Guardsman—probably a friend of the family: I am not introduced—is playing a war-game with the soldiers. My little friend, for whose sole edification the presents were intended, has been sent upstairs to the nursery, because he would insist on overthrowing his mother's castles, getting in the way of his father's train, and disturbing the strategical arrangement of the Guardsman's troops.

The more I read the accounts of the revels which are supposed to be popular and seasonable at this period of the year, the more do I rejoice at being

in a position from which I cannot possibly be called upon to participate in them. I shall certainly not be awakened this very night by a hoarse sextet of inebriated "waits" singing "Noel" and "The Mistletoe Bough." On Christmas morning I shall not rise to discover that some thoughtful host has filled my best pair of shooting-stockings with chocolate and crackers, a pound and a half of ripe figs being firmly wedged into the toe of each. My dining-room table will not be so lavishly ornamented with holly that I am unable to reach across for the salt without pricking myself severely. I shall be able to walk about safely in the front hall without perceiving a bashful spinster of some seventy summers standing with pathetic patience beneath a spray of mistletoe, hungrily waiting for something to happen.

As a writer of stories for magazines I have had the inestimable privilege of enjoying the glamour and romance of Christmas long ago, during the summer months. It was then that I sat at my desk, on some sweltering night in August, composing those delightful tales which are at this moment brightening the columns of the various Christmas Numbers to which I was commissioned to contribute. This evening I have spent a happy half-hour looking through some of the stories which I then perpetrated, and I can see at a glance how much easier it was to write about snow and ice

and cold and yule-logs and holly-berries when the thermometer stood at eighty in the shade, and one could give a free rein to one's imagination, than it would be to write about such horrors now, when the cold is far too real to be pleasant, and the ice is not content to confine itself to the skating pond, but must needs encroach upon the sacred precincts of one's very bath.

The first story that catches my eye is one I wrote for the Christmas Number of *Home Snippets*. It is called "The Highwayman's Revenge." "'Twas Christmas Eve," it begins—as indeed they all do. "The wind blew keen and shrill across Dartmoor Common. Through the mist that veiled the Heath like some dark, ominous pall, the single figure of a solitary horseman might have been seen making its way across a bleak expanse of open and inhospitable country. At the cross-roads the rider stopped to inspect the priming of his pistol and draw his cloak more tightly round him; then, turning his steed northwards with a grim smile, he drove his spurs into the flanks of the startled animal and . . ." so on.

For a simpler and more homely style I have only to turn to the *Family Chronicle*. Here my tale is entitled "The Bells of Yule," and appears to be a story of rural English life. "'Twas Christmas Eve. The logs burnt briskly and merrily in the huge fireplace of Squire Gooch's library at Crowley

Manor, while falling snow ruffled softly at the window-pane outside. The Squire sat in his accustomed seat by the fire, reading the second chapter of Job to his little grandson, Jasper, a boy of some seven years of age. Suddenly, without a word of warning, the outer door opened to admit the tall figure of an elderly woman, dressed entirely in black. Squire Gooch did not look up. . . .” It seems rather a tedious story, and I cannot for the life of me remember what happened, or why Squire Gooch didn’t look up.

As I peruse my own contributions to the literature of the season, I realise why it is that the advent of Yuletide leaves me comparatively cold. To me at least, Christmas is such a reality in August that by the time December comes I am too busy thinking of summer to pay much attention to anything else. Here on my desk at this moment, for instance, lies the beginning of a short story which I am engaged in writing for the Summer Number of the *Perfect Lady*. “The July sun shone brightly down upon the waters of the deep lagoon. All Venice was ablaze with colour. The Bridge of Sighs was bathed in a warm haze which lent an air of peace and tranquility to the sleepy scene. On the crimson cushions of her gaily-appointed gondola reclined Lady Elizabeth Vernon, gazing fixedly across the Grand Canal, drinking it all in. . . .” (I see that I must

alter that last sentence. It seems liable to misconstruction.)

I am not a cynic, nor a curmudgeon, who abuses Christmas and hates to see other people enjoying themselves. Far from it. I have a very real and deep affection for Christmas and all that relates to it. But I should like to see the revelling that seems to be inseparable from this anniversary confined to the very old or the very young—to those who are either in their first, second, or third childhood. I find it singularly easy to be happy without being noisy or over-eating myself. I can entertain sentiments of kindness and affection for my neighbours without having to give them presents that they don't want.

The custom of presenting gifts is no doubt a very delightful one, and should be encouraged as much as possible; but it becomes even more delightful and worthy of encouragement when practised spasmodically throughout the year, and not necessarily confined to one particular season or occasion. As it is, Christmas presents have begun to be looked upon as a necessary nuisance which but few have the moral courage to escape, and there can be hardly anyone left who would not rejoice at a revolution in ideas which should make the giving of presents to any save children a social offence punishable by fine or ostracism.

Think of the mental agony we undergo when some

over the past year, that cemetery of good intentions ! Let me start afresh to-day with an entirely new set of moral resolves, founded upon the experience of the past twelve months—a fabric strong enough, I hope, to withstand the particular temptations to which I am subject.

I will at once proceed to enumerate a few of the sacrifices that I am determined to make, a few of the failings that I have decided to conquer. I am resolved—I say it in all humility, with the consciousness of past failure strong upon me—to tolerate stupidity ; to suffer Suffragettes gladly ; to be amused by Mr Malcolm Scott and Mr Harry Fragon ; to chalk my cue ; to return my partner's deal ; to beware of the steam-roller ; to think Imperially ; to wait until the train stops ; to replace the divot, and to remember that nothing but a profane silence can possibly meet the case, whenever my peculiar form of golf conduces to anything that may possibly be termed mere spadework ; to answer letters by return of post ; to please shake the bottle before using ; to treat female post-office clerks with the same measure of deference and civility that they accord to me ; to pretend that I prefer journeying on the South Eastern Railway to travelling in a bath-chair propelled by an inebriated veteran suffering from chronic asthma ; to love the neighbours as myself, and, in fact, to combine all the

more popular of the cardinal virtues with tact, discrimination, good table-manners, and a sense of social discernment as exquisite as it is rare. Last (but not least), I am determined to shake off that vice which has ever been the one great stumbling block in my life ; I mean the vice of modesty.

"Modesty," as Mr Bart Kennedy, that exquisite stylist whose spasmodic effusions in the public press we await with so much impatience, once said, "modesty is a most dangerous quality to possess. You are so apt to be snowed under." Upon this question I am glad to be able to see eye to eye with Bart. Modesty has often made existence a veritable purgatory for me. As a youth I suffered the tortures of the condemned owing to my abnormal self-consciousness ; I was so bashful that the sound of a woman's voice sent the blood rushing feverishly to my head, while my tongue clove (or clave, as some authorities prefer it) to the roof of my mouth. In public places I blushed so profusely that I became a perfect eyesore : my appearance was a constant source of anxiety to my friends. "Pull yourself together, Reginald. Look human!" they would implore, but my natural diffidence forbade me to adopt either of the courses suggested.

In that Victorian epoch to which I allude, the memory of which is still a source of acute discomfort to my sensitive soul, modesty was praised

as a virtue instead of being condemned as a vice. It is only in these later years that I am beginning—in company with the remainder of mankind—to realise the folly of timidity and the wisdom of egoism. If this fundamental truth could but be dinned into the ears of children, they would be saved much heart-burning and bitterness of spirit when, on reaching what are known as “riper years,” they realised how often they had missed the golden opportunity of gaining that enviable notoriety which so greatly enhances the reputation of a public man to-day.

I have at last managed, by a judicious combination of bluff and careful dieting, to shake off my early disinclination to exaggerate my own importance, and am gradually inducing my fellow-men to agree with my estimate of my own powers. Women no longer find me shy ; in my presence they live with one hand on the door-knob and the other on the bell. Editors to whom I used to cringe, who lost my MSS., stole my stamps and trod (metaphorically) upon my every toe, greet me now as an equal, invite me to lunch at Romano’s—nay, even allow me to pay the bill.

I am, in fact, no longer “snowed under.” But I never cease to regret that it has taken me thirty years to discover that neither artistic merit, literary skill, nor brilliant workmanship is of any avail unless it be founded upon a background of

personal puff, of boom, and of bombast. From to-day I cast all thoughts of self-effacement to the winds ; I take my proper place in the world among the supermen, the heroes of my race, proudly and without shame.

It is true, as some philosopher has remarked, that we are all potential heroes, only awaiting the opportunity of displaying our latent heroism. Some of us have not to wait long. I myself had only to wait until yesterday for the laurel to descend upon my brow. Let me explain. (Let me also state that, however important a part I may have played in the drama I propose to unfold to mortal view, I claim no public recognition in the shape of either the Albert Medal or any other form of decoration. The sense of duty nobly done is a sufficient reward. In my capacity of clerk of the Borough Council of Slocum Pogis I already wear the riband of the Victorian Order, fourth class. That is enough.)

As I was passing through St James's Park yesterday, on my way home from a wedding, I saw a small child, of the urchin variety, fall into the water. I was wearing new patent-leather boots at the time, and a rather smart pair of shepherd's-plaid trousers. This, however, was not the moment to consider such things as these, and I scarcely gave them a thought. I may here observe that I am by nature very tender-hearted. I simply hate

to see a man fall from the top of a factory chimney on to the pavement at my feet, or a woman run over by a steam-roller, or indeed anything of that kind; and to watch a little child drowning within a few yards of me has an exceedingly dispiriting effect upon my appetite. A little thing like that is sufficient to upset me for several hours, and I have hardly yet recovered from the severe mental shock which I received yesterday. It was not so much the nature of the accident—though that was sad enough—as the attitude of the public, that shocked and depressed me. I assure you—and as an Englishman I am loth to say it—that although there were several people present within a stone's throw of the scene, not one of them seemed inclined to leap into the water and rescue the child from certain death! I was positively ashamed of my countrymen. "O England! Mother England!" I thought, "and hast thou come to this?" (I forget the exact words that I used, but they were somewhat to that effect.) This was no time for idle phrases, however; it was a time for action!

I bore the expression of public apathy as long as I could, but at last, when flesh and blood could stand it no longer—the infant had just come up for the third time and was getting simply soaked—I stepped across to a working-man who happened to be passing over the bridge, and asked him rather

sharply whether he was going to stand idly by and allow a child to drown before his very eyes. The fellow seemed surprised. He had only just arrived on the scene, and had not observed the accident—I give him credit for that. He looked at me curiously for a moment, and then ran to the water's edge and pulled the child out—just in time. The man had to wade in up to his knees, and got his hands dreadfully wet, I'm afraid, but I daresay he is none the worse to-day for his adventure. Of course, a crowd collected immediately, and, after giving my card to a man who looked as if he might be a reporter, I came away. I naturally did not wish to be made a hero of, and my only object in writing down this incident is to chronicle the sad fact that it is still possible in this enlightened England of ours, at the beginning of the twentieth century, for a human being to perish in public without a hand being held out to save him.

It is lamentable, but true, But for me, that child might have been drowned! Instead, he will probably grow up to pass with honours into the Reformatory (or wherever it is that the lower classes are educated), become a Radical M.P., and teach the working-men to appropriate land which belongs to other people. He may even turn out to be a credit to his country, and emigrate to Canada. If so, I cannot help hoping that he will sometimes give a thought to the pretty gentleman

in the shepherd's-plaid trousers who ~~saved his~~ life, though I confess that in acting as I did I was prompted by the most altruistic motives, and had no idea of gaining the gratitude of a possible Labour Member or (as I said before) the Albert Medal.

After all, I only did what any man worthy of the name of Englishman would have done in my place. I neither desire nor deserve credit, though I am surprised that the incident did not find its way into the evening papers. (That man cannot have been a reporter after all.) As Emerson truly said, "To lead a decent life at all requires heroic thoughts."

No. 6—FEBRUARY

LONDON.

I WAS the victim of a somewhat curious experience this afternoon. I entered a stationer's shop, intending to purchase a copy of *The Nation*. With this view I handed the nobleman at the bookstall a small coin, and seized the object of my quest from the counter. I was about to leave the shop in my usual dignified manner when the stationer called my attention to the coin which I had just pressed upon him, to which he seemed to have taken a passionate and violent dislike. It turned out, on examination, to be a piece of foreign money, of uncertain nationality and negligible value. It looked like a dime that had seen better days, or a five-centime piece that had been run over once or twice by a train. The news-vendor opined that it was a Scandinavian penny. To me it appeared to be more in the nature of a token struck in connection with some bazaar or other local celebration, and intended for circulation only in the Hartz Mountains. The fact, however, remained that it was of no value, except as a sacred relic, and I at once replaced it by a solid English sixpence.

I was once more about to make a dignified exit when the shopkeeper drew my notice to the fact that I was taking *two* copies of *The Nation*, instead of one, and had apparently no intention of paying for the second. It was, of course, a mere accident, but I felt quite guilty and self-conscious. Fortunately, I was wearing a new eye-glass at the time, and looked the very essence of respectability, or I am confident that the man would have suspected me of trying to swindle him. As it was I could not help feeling rather uncomfortable, and, during the course of my walk home, I kept imagining that people were looking at me in an odd and unpleasantly suspicious manner. On arriving at my own front door I was conscious of an echo to this popular behaviour in the surprised look with which the butler (a man of studiously temperate habits, a teetotaller, though not a bigoted one) regarded me. I soon discovered the cause. The hat I was wearing was not my own. I appear to have brought away some other member's head-gear from the club. It was in better repair than mine, so under ordinary circumstances I should not have objected. But this particular hat was decorated with a small rosette in front, and the crown was fastened to the brim on either side by a piece of black cord. It was evidently the property of a Colonial Bishop. Combined with my short coat and brown boots, the effect of this crown

to my get-up can hardly be said to have been episcopal, and I must admit that my whole personal appearance was calculated to create comment.

I returned the offending hat to its rightful owner with a rather sharp note, in which I made a few scathing remarks upon the lamentable carelessness of some members of the Athenæum, and of Colonial Bishops in particular, and begged that my own property might be returned to me at once. My only regret is that I never had the pleasure of seeing His Lordship walk down Pall Mall with his eminently orthodox make-up of apron and black putties surmounted by a billy-cock hat.

There is no moral to this tale ; except, perhaps, that it is always wiser to give foreign coins of doubtful value to blind persons or cabmen in the dark, and that it is rarely safe to join a club to which Colonial Bishops are permitted to belong.

I have just spent a pleasant evening reading the views of Father Vaughan upon Society. He is certainly our most amusing preacher, for the moment, and every thinking man has, I suppose, been struck by his extraordinary insight into the private life of our so-called Smart Set. The worthy ecclesiastic must indeed have something more than a mere bowing acquaintance with the second footmen of the West End to have acquired that profound and intimate knowledge of the doings

of their employers which is his chief claim to notoriety.

It is indeed true, and none deplores the fact more than I, that (as Father Vaughan has declared) the flower of English manhood and maidenhood is being rapidly ruined to-day by the insidious wiles of the demon Bridge, which is gradually but surely undermining the well-being of our fashionable homes and casting a blight upon the hearths of our upper classes. Many a time have I wept to see some penurious younger son, lured by a smart hostess of his acquaintance to dine in her luxurious flat in Jermyn Street, leaving the house without a shilling in his pocket, forced, perhaps, to borrow a cab-fare from the hall-porter of White's Club, after having spent a whole night at the gaming-table and lost nearly thirty-five shillings (in half-pennies) at that accursed game of Bridge. Many a time have I watched some young, light-hearted English girl, with that fresh complexion of which as Britons we are justly proud (and which can only be obtained at one shop in Bond Street) rise painfully from the card-table, after having revoked three times in succession, a loser to the extent of nearly eight shillings (in farthings) and bid a haggard "Good-night" to her hostess without making the slightest attempt to discharge her liabilities.

It is all very tragic. I am old enough to remember the happy days before Bridge was

invented, when it was the custom for guests to sit together after dinner in ill-assorted couples, longing for courage to cross the floor and talk to kindred spirits who were being bored to death by their partners in other corners of the room, squeezing the lemon of conversation as dry as a bone, and waiting patiently for the clock to strike eleven and for the advent of their carriages to be announced. Nowadays all that is changed. Those of us who wish to talk to the objects of our choice can generally manage to drag them into some quiet corner after dinner, while the other guests exercise their intellects and retard their digestions by taking part in that iniquitous game of which Father Vaughan and the Bishop of London have proved themselves such competent critics.

Why is it, I wonder, that persons who take it upon themselves to write about Society, should rely so exclusively upon their imagination for their facts? I read some time ago an article by Mrs Sarah Grand, on the subject of domestic servants, in which her knowledge of the doings of the aristocracy was really surprising. Our gentle-minded maids, she tells us, have an opportunity of picking up an extensive vocabulary from ladies of "smart" society, who "habitually season their wit and relieve their feelings by the use of language not considered becoming in an officer and a gentleman." Where is it, I wonder, that harmless, well-meaning

ladies like Mrs Grand, acquire such remarkable information? And where on earth exists the amazing society which they depict? Is there really a social set in which husbands are seldom sober, wives habitually unfaithful; where daughters contract loveless alliances with (what Mr Carnegie calls) "worthless dukes"; while sons cheat at Bridge, eking out a precarious livelihood, not (like the Scilly Islanders) by taking in one another's washing, but by the simpler method of taking in one another?

I have spent a certain amount of my life in the houses of the affluent (as a paying guest, of course), but have never yet encountered any of the characters which adorn the pages of a Corellian or a Grand romance. The language and behaviour of my host and hostess have never been such as to bring a blush to the blameless cheek of the powdered footmen who stand motionless behind their chairs. I have even seen a careless servant drop a dish of ice-cream down the neck of a Dowager Duchess without witnessing any paroxysm of justifiable fury or hearing that torrent of Billingsgate which the perusal of so-called society novels had led me to expect. Her Grace merely fixed the unfortunate menial with her basilisk eye, turned a more than usually frozen smile upon her agonised hostess, and tactfully dropped a wafer-biscuit down her back to keep the ice company. Not

a plate was thrown ; not an unkind word passed the distinguished victim's lips !

Where, then, does the authoress get her ideas as to the vituperative eloquence of the upper classes ? I have moved in circles (and in squares) where such words as " deevy " and " disky " were of painfully frequent occurrence. I have been conscious (as Mr Kemble used to say) of a rising feeling of nausea which the conversation of my associates did nothing to allay. But the epithets in use were always of an innocent, if occasionally of an inane, character.

I cannot help thinking that the lady novelist is wrong ; that there are still in this England of ours one or two aristocratic houses where profanity is discouraged, where morality is cultivated, where decency prevails ; that there are one or two families, even in the most exclusive sets, whose manners and conduct do not compare unfavourably with those of their retainers. I cannot help thinking that even during the throes of a final dress-rehearsal at Chatsworth—and a rehearsal, as we are well aware, is the most trying of all social functions—Mr Charles Hawtrey's delicate ears have never been shocked, nor his sensitive nature offended by the violent vocabulary of his fellow players.

Members of the Smart Set—if such a set exists—are not all useless drones. Many of them, as

is well-known, have tried to add to their pocket-money by indulging in trade, by starting milk-shops, bonnet-shops, flower-shops, and so on. My dear old friend, Lord Albert Fitzgranard, for instance, has set up a delightful bric-a-brac emporium in a little street off St Martin's Lane. Here you can get the most exquisite Japanese fans for the smoking-room mantelpiece, or a waste-paper basket of solid wickerwork for the study, at a price which is certainly not more than twice what you would have to pay at Harrod's Stores.

Lord Albert (or "Bertie," as he is always called) is an indefatigable worker, being generally at his office by midday, and rarely leaving the shop, except for a brief luncheon interval, till three o'clock in the afternoon.

The other morning, happening to drop in to choose a set of woollen antimacassars for a dear aunt who has just bought a family seat called "The Nook," near Putney, I had an opportunity of watching his lordship at work. A wealthy old lady who lives (or rather exists) at Crouch End had just popped in to try and match a wooden paper-knife, engraved with a photographic view of Milan Cathedral. She soon fell a victim to the persuasive blandishments of the noble shopwalker, and was speedily induced to purchase half-a-dozen exquisite ashtrays made of plaited wire and decorated with a medallion portrait of His Majesty,

a couple of hand-painted satin tea-cosies, and a fountain pen that filled itself automatically in the inkpot and subsequently emptied itself in its owner's pocket.

A little later Lord Albert was showing a new form of wallpaper to another customer. "Isn't it splendid?" he said. "Looks exactly like marble!" Again the visitor was convinced, while his lordship hastened to conceal his amusement in the rabbit-hutch which is technically known as the cashier's desk. After this a social function claimed his attention for an hour or two; he attended a gala performance at the Opera, spent a few moments in the Royal Enclosure at Ascot, and was present at a musical *conversazione* in Park Lane. But he was back in time to help the junior assistant put up the shutters and close the shop; and it was a tired Lord Albert who climbed into bed on Sunday morning.

Lord Albert Fitzgranard always maintains a dignified and discreet reserve upon the question of his business. On the front of his shop appears the announcement, "Isaacs and Albertsheimer," while a smaller notice informs the stranger that the best prices are given for old teeth, etc. In private life there is nothing of the shopwalker about Bertie; the only time when I have known him to carry his business methods beyond the boundaries of his shop was once at the Ritz, when the waiter

had just brought him the bill, and his lordship, after glancing through the various items in an absent-minded way, suddenly called out, "Sign!" in a high nasal voice. With ready tact I at once upset a glass of claret over my neighbour, and thus saved an awkward situation.

No. 7—MARCH

LONDON.

THE Session has attracted more people than usual to London this year. I realise this by the number of invitations I am receiving to dinners and evening parties. I have sometimes thought of writing a little book on the subject of invitations—how to word them, and how they should be answered—but have never had the zeal to start. Such a treatise would be invaluable to Labour Members and others to whom Society is a foreign and terrifying land.

Invitations may be of many kinds—all more or less acceptable. There is, first of all, the formal invitation, to the effect that the Countess of So-and-So requests the honour of Mr Smith's company to dinner at 8.30 on a particular date. This requires an equally formal reply, couched in the third person, somewhat in the following style:—"Mr Smith presents his compliments to the Countess of So-and-So, and I'll be there." The habit of writing "Yes" or "No" on the back of the card of invitation and returning it to the sender in an unstamped envelope cannot be too strongly deprecated.

Then there is the invitation that runs as follows : "Lady So-and-So At Home. Dancing. Small and Early." This is, perhaps, a trifle puzzling to the novice. "Dancing" (in the case of a Labour Member) implies that hobnailed pumps should be worn and white cotton gloves carried in the hand. And though "Small and Early" may present insuperable difficulties to the uninitiated mind of the Chicago Millionaire, he need not be unnecessarily alarmed. The dance in question cannot in reality be "Small," or he would never have been invited. "Early" is merely a euphemism for 10.30 p.m. (an hour when every self-respecting Pork King would naturally be thinking of taking off his waistcoat and retiring for the night), and is a delicate hint to the guests to order their carriages before dawn.

"Music" is another word that figures with considerable prominence upon the modern invitation card, and used to puzzle me when I was young. I have long ceased, however, to worry myself on the subject. It does not mean, as the Self-made Man might imagine, that he is expected to bring his mouth-organ with him. It refers solely to the class of entertainment with which a kind-hearted hostess intends to lure diffident guests beneath her hospitable roof. During the evening, at such a reception as is here implied, there will be a performance of a musical character, to which Margaret

Cooper, Melba, Kubelik and Harry Lauder will contribute items calculated to stimulate conversation among the guests. The latter need not fear that they will be called upon to dance a cellar-flap.

Again, I was once nonplussed by observing the cryptic initials "R.S.V.P." printed upon an invitation. I have now learnt that if this cabalistic sign be not underlined, no notice whatever should be taken of it. If, however, the letters are underlined three times in red ink, and the words "I *do* hope you will be able to come!" (in the obvious orthography of a secretary) adorn one corner of the card, it is as well to send some sort of acknowledgment, as, for example, "Mr Smith's compts. and will be most appy."

Informal invitations are, of course, a much more delicate and less common attention. It may happen that one has been presented to Lady So-and-So, at the opening ceremony of some local bazaar. The titled lady (who has not caught one's name) has asked how many children one has got, and, on being told the exact number, has remarked, with every symptom of boredom, "How very interesting!" She has then probably added, in an absent-minded manner, "Well, I must be going on now, Mr er-er-er, but I shall hope to see something of you in London this autumn." An invitation couched in such vague terms as this can be safely disregarded without impoliteness.

In fact, it would be wiser to forget it altogether, as her ladyship has doubtless done long ago. If, on the other hand, the noble and gracious lady has specified a particular date, has fixed an hour, and has urged one to partake of some meal (probably luncheon) at her house in Grosvenor Square, one is right in assuming that one's presence will not be unwelcome, and may accept the invitation as calmly as the natural excitement of the moment will allow.

Luncheon is an informal repast. To attend this meal it is not necessary to put on evening dress, or, in fact, to disguise oneself at all. Before entering the drawing-room, however, it is always as well to rub the right hand rapidly once or twice on the leg of the trouser, and Labour Members would be correct in loosening the string that confines their nether garments at the knee.

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What I should do without the good advice I get from my daily paper almost every morning, I shudder to think. Only the other day I picked it up to read a brief article, headed "How to be pretty"—and now even my best friends don't know me when they meet me. In the matter of physical charms, the complexion is, of course, the first thing to be thought of. Many a man who bears a striking resemblance to the Ethiopian (with a slight dash of leopard) of whom the Psalmist

sings so eloquently, has missed his chance of happiness because of his unalluring appearance. This is easily cured, however. All you need (according to the article to which I have already referred) is a bran bath. Just pop round to the corndealer and buy some ordinary bran in an ordinary sack. Epicures may prefer to purchase their bran in a pillow-slip, but that is quite unnecessary. Add a little hot water, a pint of unwhipped cream, and a dash of lemon. Then climb lightly into the bag—having, of course, removed your clothes (behind a screen) in the meanwhile—draw the neck of the sack together over your head, and tie it lightly with pink tape at the mouth. This requires a little practice, but at first you can always get your valet (or, if you don't possess a valet, a boy-messenger) to do it for you. Next, you must assume a prone and horizontal position at the top of the front stairs, and allow yourself to roll gently and quietly down to the basement, taking care not to damage the priceless ormulu clock at the corner of the second landing, and keeping your head well away from the dado during your descent.

You have no idea how different you will feel after this pleasant experience. You come out of the bran (when your valet or the boy-messenger permits) refreshed and altogether invigorated, and with a complexion which some misguided persons might be induced to allude to as "bran

new." Your task is not yet finished, however. The treatment is only half over. After being carried back to your bedroom on a shutter, sending for the family physician, and ordering some hot-house grapes, you must direct your valet (or, of course, the boy-messenger) to rub your surface briskly with handfuls of plain kitchen salt. When this operation is satisfactorily completed you won't know yourself. You will be an altered being. Your children won't recognise you when you come down to family prayers. The dog will run screaming from the room at your approach. You will, indeed, be a different person—and I take it that any change must be for the better.

Mrs Ella Wheeler Wilcox, whose "Poems of Passion" were at one time the invariable Christmas present which young persons gave to each other (with a suitable quotation inscribed at the beginning), and who is the author of that memorable phrase, "Drink, and the world drinks with you; swear off, and you drink alone!" has been giving the readers of the *New York Journal* some good advice as to what course should be pursued by a wife who believes that her husband has grown indifferent to her charms. Some women would weep and make a scene, and threaten to take an overdose of Odol. This is altogether wrong: worse, it is foolish. All a wife need do, according to Mrs Wilcox, is to

"sit down alone by herself"—of course, if she is alone, she will generally be by herself; but this is beside the point—"relax every muscle, and take fully fifty deep inhalations of fresh air, slowly exhaling your breath until you feel calm." I need not point out that the air must be perfectly fresh, and that to take fifty full inhalations and not to exhale at all is absolutely fatal. You cease to be a wife at once, and become a mere balloon. "Be agreeable and entertaining," continues Ella, "and make your husband realise that no more tactful and charming woman is to be found outside of his home." I may be captious, but it seems to me that any man who realised that there was no more charming woman to be found outside of his home would scarcely be indifferent to the charms of the wife inside of his home. To advise a woman to make her husband love her, as a cure for his having ceased to care for her, is like telling a person who is seeking the sure road to happiness that he has only got to take a happy view of life to get what he desires.

Long breaths seem to be the modern cure for most ailments. As a person who has suffered much from insomnia, I am glad to see that a certain Doctor M'Comb has discovered this safe cure for sleeplessness, and has presented his discovery to the worthy readers of *Good Housekeeping*.

When you cannot sleep, says the good doctor,

all you need do is to say to yourself, "I don't care a fig whether I sleep or not. If I sleep, well; if not, also well, though not so well!" You then drink a glass of milk, relax the body, take a series of long breaths, rolling your eyes up and down in concert with your profound inhalations, until you finally induce the required state of coma.

All this sounds easy enough, but, as a matter of fact, it is not quite so simple as one would imagine. After many restless nights of tossing to and fro, the mind filled with distressing thoughts and sinister forebodings, memories of missed opportunities and blighted hopes, with the cares of the future thick upon one, and the brokers battering at the door, it is impossible to say to oneself, "If I don't sleep; well!" At least, it is possible to say this, but it is impossible to believe that one is telling the truth. Sleeplessness is indeed very far from being "well," and not all the auto-suggestion in the world will ever make it tolerable.

The rest of Dr M'Comb's recipe is simplicity itself, but, to my mind, has certain grave disadvantages. Last night, for instance, I tried the plan of taking long breaths, and rolled my eyes backwards and forwards until I became quite giddy. At eight o'clock this morning my servant came to call me, and found me still busy rolling. In another hour I think I might have got to sleep. As it was, the man was so alarmed at my appearance

—I had by this time absorbed every atom of oxygen in the room, and my eyes had made the famous anchor-stroke at least a thousand times—that he hastened off in search of a doctor, tripped up over a can of hot water and fell down three flights of stairs, striking his head on a valuable Louis Seize coal-scuttle in the basement. Fortunately, he is insured, but the boot-trees which he was carrying at the time of the accident are so irretrievably dented and deformed by their fall that they will never again be of the slightest use to anyone but a confirmed sufferer from the most malignant form of rich man's gout. 'Tis a sad world we live in !

No. 8—APRIL

LONDON.

LONDON is fashionably empty, save for the brake-loads of conscientious Americans hurrying to Hampton Court, and the "personally conducted" groups of our own wide-mouthed country-folk on their way from Madame Tussaud's to Westminster Abbey. Easter holiday-makers have not yet returned to the metropolis, but it is no longer necessary for the self-conscious citizen to slink shamefully along the deserted West-end thoroughfares, his guilty footsteps hastened by the constant dread of recognition. Several householders in Mayfair, strong in the courage of their convictions or because they consider further concealment useless, are drawing up their front blinds and preparing to renounce the area gate as the sole means of egress.

Meanwhile the year has not been standing still. I am an earnest student of Nature, a confirmed botanist, a passionate horticulturist. I can sit for hours in a garden watching the flowers grow ; and I always peruse, with very deep interest, those newspaper paragraphs which refer to plant life. Now (I read) is the mole's busy season. Tender

shoots of "Louse-lie-squeaking" blossom in the hedgerows; already the trailing pergola is pink with "Prickly-nosewart." A curate at Clapham has heard the cuckoo call. In the long, lush grasses of Wimbledon Common the martingale constructs her nest; nor are the signs of other feathery architects absent from the eaves of many a Tooting villa. In Epping Forest the snaffle woos his mate, conscious of the approach of spring, while the early worm rises with commendable politeness and punctuality to receive the visit of the first bird.

Would that mortals could always be as polite and as punctual as the beasts that perish! I should like to see the art of politeness introduced into every sphere of human endeavour; I could wish it taught in every school and practised in every profession. Civility is so simple a matter, and yet how greatly it helps to smooth the path of life!

I am led to these observations by the daily scenes of which I am the unwilling witness as I stroll down Birdcage Walk of a morning on my way to work.

Surely it is high time that our soldiers and sailors should cease to be treated in the uncereemonious manner which, as human beings and brothers, they are justly entitled to resent. Often and often, as I pass Wellington Barracks, has my blood boiled on hearing the peremptory tone in which commands are given. "Form fours!" "Present arms!"

and so on. Never a "Please" or a "Thank you," to mitigate the severity of these rude orders !

As a Socialist I protest against a freeborn Briton being roughly spoken to by a so-called superior, who is, after all, only a superior in education, intellect, wealth, breeding, manners, and the like, and who will cease to be that as soon as the Plural Voting Bill becomes law.

It is so easy to be polite, as I have already remarked. Courtesy costs nothing. I sincerely hope that I may live to see the brutal military words of command, which are at present such a shock to every sensitive ear, transformed into something more suave, less likely to irritate the delicate susceptibilities of those warm-hearted, semi-educated sons of Empire upon whose shoulders the government of the country will shortly devolve.

When that happy time comes, I shall be able to pass along Birdcage Walk with no feeling of resentment in my heart, while my ears are agreeably tickled by the gentle voice of the adjutant or sergeant-major, as he exclaims :

"Pray give me your attention" (instead of that odious "Shun !").

"Would you be so kind as to form fours ?"

"I think it wouldn't be a bad plan if we were to slope arms !"

"Kindly pull the trigger sufficiently strenuously

to allow the striker to impinge upon the cap of the cartridge ! ”

“ I should be obliged if the squad whom it is my privilege to command would favour me by fixing bayonets ! ”

“ Be good enough to stand in a position of comparative comfort ! ”

“ What is the matter with a little quick march ? ”

“ Please stop now, if you don't mind ! ”

“ If it's all the same to you, I think we might turn to the right about ! ”

“ I beg you to consider the morning's drill at an end ! ” And so on.

So much can be achieved by kindness in this world of ours that I am strongly of opinion that a system of civil and courteous drill, backed by a course of polite and sentimental treatment in the barrack-room, would do more to popularise our army than all the shouting that at present makes day hideous to delicate-minded men like myself, who occasionally find themselves unwilling witnesses of the barbarisms prevalent upon our modern barrack-squares. The proud but honest British stokers who mutinied some years ago would never have broken a single window, I'll be bound, if in place of that hateful “ On the knee ! ” their officer had tactfully murmured, “ Be seated, gentlemen ! ” Never.

Why am I not a sailor? I ask myself this question regularly every morning after breakfast. Hitherto I have been quite unable to find a satisfactory reply. The pleasures of a Life on the Ocean Wave, not to mention the joys of a Home on the Rolling Deep (not *too* rolling, of course), appeal to me irresistibly. Whenever I take up my morning paper and read of the daily festivities that brighten the lot of the Jolly Jack Tar, I regret that my parents were short-sighted enough to overlook the Navy as a possible profession for their most promising offspring.

The sailor's life appears to be one perpetual round of merry-making. He is fêted wherever he goes: he is banqueted at every port. With his pockets gorged with gold, and his arm about the neck of some foreign seaman with whose language he is sufficiently acquainted for purposes of offering and accepting refreshment, he rolls uproariously along the street, full of benevolence and benedictine, until the doorway of some local tavern automatically absorbs him. I should do all this so well. With my hat (or more probably my foreign host's hat) on the back of my head, with a whistle attached to my neck by a piece of cord (in case I should at any time feel impelled to call a taxi), I see myself swinging down Broadway or the Rue de la Paix, carefully avoiding the deadly trolley-car and the still more fatal *fiacre*, while French and American

ladies, with long eyelashes and short waists, beg me for the hat-ribbon upon which the name of my ship is blazoned in letters of gold. My trousers bulge at the base ; I have discarded the use of those braces to which the ordinary civilian delegates so much responsibility ; my conversation is interlarded with "Yoho !" and other expressions smacking of the quarter-deck ; I am ready to shiver my timbers, to scuttle the keel, to belay, to do all the delightful things that sailors alone seem called upon to undertake. Alas ! it is not to be ! I am destined to remain a landlubber all my life. Save for an occasional yachting cruise round the Isle of Wight, I must stay ashore the whole year round.

Ah, well, as the poet sings, "'Tis better to have luffed and lost than never to have luffed at all !"

LONDON.

REUTER telegraphs from St Petersburg that the Russian newspaper, the *Razviet*, is not appearing, because the printers refuse to work unless their comments are inserted in the political articles. It would be interesting to consider the possible effect upon, say, *The World* or *Vanity Fair*, should any particularly cantankerous compositor, fired by the example of his foreign confrères, insist upon decorating with his own personal views the letterpress which it was his duty to set up. The result might perhaps be something as follows :—

“SOCIETY NEWS

. . . Church Parade was well attended. Sir George Tressidy and his daughter hurried through the park at tea-time in a motor. Lord and Lady Charlie Pinner were walking, accompanied by their tiny Dalmatian dog. Lady Kipps looked very sweet in a green toque, while the Baroness Boshoffstein wore black as usual. (*Mrs 'Enery Brown was setting on a bench near the Achilles Statue along of Jimmy and the bloomination twins. She was*

dressed in her noo rabbitskin cape trimmed with jet bugles, and chatted quite haffable-like to Miss Eliza Baker, 'er wot keeps the small bottle hemporium orf the back o' King's Cross Station.) Lord Bertie Clarence, who arrived alone, seemed to find many friends near the railings. (Miss Eliza Baker passed some very comical remarks about the gentlefolks; she 'aving been 'tweeny' in a hundertaker's family at 'Endon seven years.) Lady Mortar and the Hon. Guinevere Pestle were the recipients of many congratulations on the success of their private theatricals at Boreham. (Old Nobby Soakface was as busy as ever with 'is barskit collecting noos-papers and orange-peel. He came and passed the time o' day to Mrs Brown afore resuming the honerous dooties of 'is perfession.) Mr 'Baby' Bullet celebrated yesterday the centenary of his lectures on Hot Air at the Benedicks' Club. He afterwards entertained the Bulgarian Minister at a quiet dinner at the Carlton. (Mr Alf. Wilks took the chair at the Street-sweepers' Annual Sing-Song Supper at the Cabman's Rest, Little Compton Street. He was subsequently joined by Mr 'Erbert 'Opgood in a pleasant game of shove-'alfpenny, and finished the evening at Bow Street.)

HARD CASE

An elderly stockbroker, with a wife and eighteen children, is staying with B, a retired Noncon-

formist brewer, at an old Elizabethan house in Staffordshire. On the morning following his arrival, A wishes to take a bath. He cannot find his dressing-gown. But the bathroom adjoins his bedroom, so he strolls in '*in puris naturalibus*,' closing his bedroom door behind him. A gets into the bath and turns on the hot water. The handle of the tap comes off in his hand, and he is unable to turn the water off again. A hastens to the door of his bedroom. The door-handle comes off in his hand. (It is evidently a very old house.) He cannot open the door. He rushes to the bathroom bell, and pulls it violently. The handle of the bell breaks off short. A is left with nothing to wear but two handles and a tap. The hot water has meanwhile filled the bath, and is rapidly flooding the bathroom. There are no windows to the bathroom. The door leading to A's bedroom is solid oak. In his efforts to escape, A comes upon a sliding-panel in the wall, which opens upon a secret passage leading to the dining-room, where the household are engaged in Family Prayers.

What should A do ?

Judgment

A should descend the passage, reach the dining-room, step as lightly as possible over the kneeling forms of the family, and regain his bedroom by the front stairs. Should B express any surprise

at A's attire, or rather at his lack of attire, A should turn the matter off in a dignified manner by saying, 'I think you dropped these,' at the same time handing B the handles and the tap. Before B can recover from his astonishment, A will have reached his bedroom and will be telephoning for a plumber.

No correct answers were received.

Answers adjudged incorrect :

A should drown himself.—Ghoo-ghoo, Wobbles,
Pink Pills, Hammer & Tongs, etc., etc.

'ARD CASE

A is a pore cabdriver with a widowed mother as drinks somethink terrible. B is a millionaire as is balmy on the crumpet. On a dark night B gives A three quid in mistake for three bob. B discovers his error, and arskes for his money back. There is no copper within sight.

What should A do ?

Judgment

A should drive orf.

Answers adjudged correct :

A should do B.—Fellow-feeling. Old Ike.

Answer adjudged incorrect :

A should do six months.—Rothschild, Inspector Henderson, etc."

A most interesting correspondence has been appearing recently in the Daily Press on the subject of kissing. Between husband and wife, declares a "prominent social writer," this custom has long since died out. The thought of imprinting a chaste salute upon the alabaster brow of his better half, ere he hastens to his daily work in the City, never crosses the mind of the average business man. "If he has any time to spare, and feels amiable," says the prominent one, "he walks round the garden and fondles the dog." (Even this is better than walking round the dog and fondling the garden.)

"For a husband to make a habit of kissing his wife in a perfectly unemotional manner—as though he was taking the top off a boiled egg—is to throw happiness away with both hands," says a well-known artist. (Even this is better than throwing boiled eggs away with both hands.) "It is like giving a wife a new hat. If a husband did it every week-end, new hats would cease to have any significance." To embrace one's helpmeet as though she were a boiled egg is an infamous practice, and cannot be too strongly deprecated. She should be treated tenderly, with that nice sense of delicacy which a man displays when he attempts to eat a poached egg with a fork. But I cannot help thinking that the custom of giving one's spouse a hat every week-end would pall upon the husband long before it "ceased to have any significance" to the wife. Kisses

should be given frugally, ceremoniously, as the reward for household economy, and not thrown about promiscuously with both hands. When the fishmonger's weekly book is particularly low, it is far more delightful to embrace the careful housewife rapturously several times over the left ear than to give her a new hat. It is also less expensive.

LONDON.

THE problem of what to eat and how to eat it becomes more and more difficult every day. Time was when I ate whatever I liked best, passed my plate for more, and never gave the matter another thought. But with advancing years I became gradually conscious of a certain inability to assimilate various kinds of food. I consulted experts, with a view to discovering the secret of retaining my youthful powers of digestion, and was flooded with well-meant but hopelessly contradictory advice. One specialist urged me to confine myself to coarse, plain food, to eschew new potatoes, green peas, and strawberries, and to avoid alcohol and cigarettes. Vainly did I point out to him that life without tobacco and asparagus would not be life within the meaning of the act, and that I would sooner perish of internal combustion than forgo my customary after-dinner glass of rare old tawny port. My adviser washed his hands of me, shrugged his shoulders, and pocketed his fee.

Soon after this I was fortunate enough to meet Mr Eustace Miles, who rapidly converted me to his

curious theories on proteids, and pressed a tin of plasmon, two monkey-nuts, and a picture postcard of Signor Caruso into my hand as he said good-bye.

For some months I lived on cereals. Vermicelli was my staple food—if vermicelli can properly be called a food at all, which I doubt—varied occasionally by a piece of cheese, a banana, or a box of chocolates. Still I grew thinner and weaker every day, until at last I hardly had the strength necessary to crack the brazil-nut which comprised my luncheon.

One morning I was introduced to a prominent member of the "Chewers," that patient, ruminant sect whose ritual consists in munching all their food in the mouth until it has entirely disappeared and there is nothing left to swallow. For three weeks I chewed everything I could see, though I found the practice interfere very materially with my conversational powers, and at dinner I was generally left chewing the fish course while the rest of the party were indulging in coffee and cigarettes.

After a time even this began to pall. So I promptly consulted another specialist. "Ah!" said this great man, "the trouble with you is that you don't give your digestion enough to do. Go away and eat lobster, and veal, and plum-pudding, and come back to me in a month." I paid my two guineas cheerfully to this genius, and strode away with a light heart to the nearest restaurant.

On the first day that I was allowed out of the

hospital I opened my daily paper to read the following paragraph, under the heading of "Foreign Intelligence" :—"Mr Wile, the chief Government Chemist of the United States, after making a series of elaborate experiments at Washington, has arrived at the conclusion that the custom of chewing meat is a harmful one, and that the proper way is to swallow food with as little mastication as possible." Here, after an effort, I was forced to draw the line. I tried hard during an entire afternoon to swallow a pork chop whole, and the greater portion of it became fixed in my lungs and was only removed with the greatest difficulty and a button-hook. A dish of new potatoes went down easily enough, but, honestly, I did not feel altogether happy about it. All that night I kept wondering what was going to happen ; and it never did.

After all, however, I suppose eating to be merely a question of habit. One man's fish, as they say in Paris, is another man's *poisson*. No regular rules can be laid down. The only thing to be careful about is the choice of edibles. Summer, as I have just been reading in the *Daily Mail*, in an entertaining article entitled "How to live long"—a habit I have always longed to acquire—is a time when we should particularly avoid those dangers to health that lurk within our food. To eat "stale or tainted fish" at breakfast, as I learn from the paper, handicaps a man in his work during

the day ; so, although the temptation to partake of this peculiar delicacy may be irresistible, no sensible person will dream of indulging in it, save upon rare occasions. Cold pork and shell-fish, too, are a fruitful source of indigestion, and Auguste tells me, with tears in his eyes, that, in so far as the Savoy Restaurant is concerned, the demand for these particular luxuries has practically ceased to exist. It is especially fatal to consume a shell-fish which is either moribund or defunct. The best way of ascertaining the true condition of the little creature's health is by tapping gently on the shell with the nail of the first finger of the right hand. If the tiny mollusc pops its head out, or even waves an arm through the porthole, you are safe in swallowing him ; if, however, he remains ingloriously mute and declines, so to speak, to answer the bell, you will be wise to replace the shell upon the dish, when it can be swiftly conveyed to the kitchen and added to the stock-pot which provides the family with its daily supply of soup.

To return to the *Daily Mail* article on the means of prolonging existence.

"Do not fill your life with silly and sordid pleasures," continues the expert, "so that when you come to die you will find that you have not really lived." (I may be captious, but I cannot for the life of me understand how, when I come to die, I may manage to feel that I have not really lived.

For if I haven't really lived I cannot really die, and in that case when I do come to die I shall probably find that I am not really dead.) To resume. "Do not be a slave to a system. If your hour to rise is 8 A.M., and at that time you haven't had sufficient rest, take a longer time." (In which case, of course, your hour to rise is no longer 8 A.M.) Good advice that. My hour to rise is a generous 9 A.M., and at that time I have never by any chance had sufficient rest. Henceforward, therefore, I shall be called at 10 A.M., and I shan't get up even then. At present, as I said before, I am called at about 9 o'clock, by a heavy-footed individual who pulls the blind up suddenly before I can remonstrate, bringing the sunshine flashing across my eyes, and forcing me to bury my head in the pillow like an ostrich. A quarter of an hour later, a bell rings in the basement, and I attend family prayers—in spirit at least. At half-past nine I am told that my bath is getting cold, and I open my eyes warily and grunt, just to show that I am awake but disinclined for conversation. At ten o'clock I climb laboriously out of bed and proceed to look at myself in the glass; after which I have to go and lie down again for a minute or two, to steady my nerves. Then I proceed to dress. (I always wish I resembled the hero of every novel, of whom one reads that "George woke to find the sun streaming into his room. He rose at once,

dressed rapidly, and in a few moments joined Violet in the garden." No bath or nonsense of that kind, mark you, but Violet in the garden, looking "cool and fresh" in a "costume of some soft clinging material"—I know it well. *My* ablutions, alas! take much longer than George's, and I fear that Violet would get tired of waiting.)

I come down to breakfast eventually at about 10.30, to find that some kindly relative has thrown the sausage-dish open to the four winds of heaven, that the toast is cold and hard, and that there is no cream left for my porridge. With a smothered exclamation, I make a hurried and inadequate meal of marmalade and bananas.

The remainder of the morning is devoted to work. I sit in front of the fire in my study, and make elaborate plans for the literary construction of my next immortal volume. It is to be quite unlike anything that I have yet written. I can see it all before me. I have even settled upon the title. Just as I am about to place my thoughts on paper, the gong sounds for luncheon, and I am reluctantly compelled to put away my pen until the morrow. The rest of the day is given up to amusement, or, rather, to leisure. (I do not believe in overworking.) A visit to Madame Tussaud's, say, or to the Coliseum, followed by tea with another person's wife. That, in my humble opinion, is the sort of *carte du jour* of which no one need be ashamed.

No. 11—JULY

LONDON.

THE Season is (for all practicable purposes) at an end. The fashionable Londoner has folded his tent and is silently creeping away to his country seat. In a fortnight he will be trekking northwards in time to hear the "bang of the rifle" on the hill, or paying his annual visit to Marienbad in order to get rid in six weeks of all those symptoms which he has been at such pains to collect during the remainder of the year.

In the more fashionable parts of Mayfair the blinds have already been lowered, the furniture is draped in chintz, the cat has been turned out into the street to starve. The season is ended.

For three of the most climatically perfect months of the year Londoners have led a strenuous life of gaiety and enjoyment in the heart of the Metropolis. They have inhaled large supplies of wood-pavement and the fumes of the passing motor-bus. They have eaten prodigally of fatted calf, and drunk copiously of the indifferent champagne with which they are in the habit of supplying their best friends. They have herded miserably together in hot

dining-rooms, pushed their way painfully through the congested doorways of crowded ball-rooms, sat for hours in the mephitic atmosphere of stuffy theatres—done everything, in fact, that tends to provide the London season with a charm peculiarly its own. Each day they have met the same friends at the same meals, plumbed the same abysses of conversational ineptitude, made the same inane remarks, and received the same commonplace replies. Each night they have danced with the same partners, passed the same strictures upon the band and the state of the floor, sought a temporary shelter in the same sequestered alcoves, and discussed the same singularly dreary topics, yawning through their noses the while. They have had a merry, merry time, and it is a bitter thing to think that such an experience cannot recur for at least another nine months.

In some respects the Season has been less successful than usual. On all sides we have heard the bitter cry of the *débutante* deploring the apparent inability of the young man of the present day to foot it upon the slippery parquet floor of the London ball-room with the gazelle-like grace of his fair partner. He does his best, poor soul, but the result is far from satisfactory. Dancing is an art, like opening bazaars, playing the zither, or singing the "Devout Plover" at village concerts—an art that can only be acquired by long and diligent study, and after arduous practice. It is not sufficient to

don a pair of white gloves, walk upstairs, shake hands with the butler under the impression that he is your South African host, clasp the prettiest girl in the room round the waist, trust in Providence, and spring convulsively round the floor like a kangaroo, alighting now on your own feet, now on your partner's, as fortune directs. This is magnificent, but it is not dancing. And there is nothing more pathetic than to watch the efforts of the callow youth who, with a far-away expression on his face and no visible control over his feet, manfully battles with the intricacies of some dance of whose very rudiments he is sublimely ignorant. A strong man struggling with adversity presents no more moving spectacle than this.

Truly—and it is as well to confess it at once—we are not a nation of dancers. Our men will never learn to overcome the insuperable difficulty of that self-consciousness which is our insular birthright. The dancing youth imagines that every chaperon has her captious eye riveted upon his movements; he is painfully conscious of the size of his portentous feet, of the drawn and fatuous expression which giddiness and mental misery have combined to stamp upon his features. No, we are not a nation of dancers. Unlike our warm-hearted brothers of the South, we have never learnt to use our hands in ordinary conversation, and we are utterly unable to express emotion with our feet.

I have just been reading the views of Dr Emil Reich on the subject. "Running or dancing," says this eminent philosopher, "is to do something rapid or out of the ordinary. It requires more thigh than hips, more legs than ankles." My face lit up as I read this. At last I understood why I have never been a really perfect dancer. I have more hips than thigh, and exactly the same number of ankles as legs! But though I admit that Dr Reich may be right, I cannot remember ever having noticed that Mdlle. Genée (our prima ballerina) has three legs and only two ankles, or that Miss Gertie Millar's shapely figure suggests the possession of those peculiar qualities which, as the professor implies, are necessary to the attainment of proficiency in the Terpsichorean art.

The holiday season is already in full swing. Every self-respecting bank clerk will soon leave the pleasantly deserted metropolis for some popular provincial resort where he can play golf with total strangers on overcrowded links, or bathe in waters troubled by the presence of a very mixed collection of human beings. The plutocrat seeks, within the limits of the four walls of his Scottish shooting-box, such seclusion as an overwhelming sense of hospitality and the importunities of ubiquitous friends will permit.

The daily papers are already rich in boating

fatalities, excursion disasters, cliff tragedies, unintentional Alpine descents, and other holiday horrors, which show clearly that the light-hearted inhabitants of these islands are everywhere engaged in enjoying themselves in the fashion peculiar to the traditions of the hardy race to which they belong.

London is a dull place just now. Clubs are empty, restaurants full of frugal foreigners, streets up, blinds down, theatres closed. Even the daily press seems to reflect something of the universal dulness, and as I pick up my morning paper I become aware of a lamentable paucity of news. My eye wanders from the leading article on the degeneracy of the British race to the column headed *Dress and Fashion*. "Crêpe-de-chine," I read with interest, "is much used for ball-dresses, the tendency of the sleeves being, as I predicted, to widen from the elbow. Waists are worn rather full just now, and shoulders somewhat higher than last year. Mousquetaire coats, with revers of black guipure slashed with sequins, and with an undersleeve of buttercloth, are likely to be revived. We are advancing towards another era of dress in which it is possible that we may have more clothes and not quite so much of them. Vermicelli patterns figure largely, with coloured cretonnes, in the new embroidery, and white blouses with lace yokes and without basques were

often to be seen at Cowes. These latter go very well with a Marie-Thérèse hat, surmounted by seven large pink pompoms, a brace of seagulls, and a pound and a half of unripe cherries."

I gather that the edict has gone forth from those who profess to control feminine fashions, forbidding women to wear hips. Members of the more emotional sex, however, are once more to be permitted to wear shoulders, and the young man-about-town need no longer go about looking like an empty bottle of Perrier water. But it is doubtful whether ears are to be worn this year flat or *ondulé*, though the practice of tying them in a sailor's knot on the top of the head, so prevalent at Ascot last summer, is likely to be discontinued after October. Any undue prominence of these organs is, in fact, to be discouraged by those who wish to be thought smart and up-to-date, and men of fashion are warned against emulating the example of the notorious aural eccentric who created such a stir in the West of England last spring. (I allude to the man of Devizes, whose ears were of different sizes; the right, which was small, was of no use at all; but the left one won several prizes.) It is as well to remember, however, that (as the old proverb says) Beauty is but skin-tight after all.

From the Fashion Column I turn with relief to that section of the paper in which is printed what

the editor rightly calls "Our Amazing New Serial Story." It is entitled "The Grey Man's Revenge," and is by the author of "The Bachelor's Baedeker, or Lives of the Hunted," etc. The short but lucid synopsis of the preceding chapters, given at the head of Chapter LXIII., is very necessary if one is to appreciate the full beauty of this fragment.

Let me give the "argument" even more briefly: *Emmeline Blithers, a proud brunette of some twenty-seven winters (of exceptional severity), is the only daughter of a Poplar Guardian. The Duke of Dulchester, a peer of notoriously evil habits, but with a singularly impressionable nature and a fondness for children and old port which almost amounts to a hobby, loves Emmeline with a passion that mocks the power of words. Emmeline who, ever since she spent a week-end with the aunt of a Socialist at Southend, has been strongly prejudiced against the idea of becoming a duchess, is in love with a young dentist of irreproachable morals, who sings in the local choir, and wears long fair hair of the capsuloid variety. Seven years before the commencement of the story, George (the heroic "gum-architect," as Mr Bernard Shaw would call him), while swimming in the Serpentine on Christmas Day, saves the Duke of Dulchester's sombrero hat from drowning. He has been trying ever since to obtain the advertised reward, but without success. Matters have now reached a*

crisis, and George, with the assistance of a detective from Scotland Yard, is searching the records of Somerset House for some trace of the lost will by means of which he intends to lay claim to the Duke of Dulchester's vast estates at Clapham. Emmeline has in the meantime dyed her hair a delicate puce colour, and in this disguise is following the guilty nobleman all over the country, and has finally run him to earth at his family seat in Wales.

CHAPTER CLXIII

"The Duke of Dulchester was sitting moodily upon the plate-chest at Dulchester Towers, brooding over the past. His, indeed, had been a lurid life. Born at the customary age, he had been at an early period of his existence exchanged for another child, and finally lost in a raffle. A wan smile flitted for a moment across the ducal lips. Suddenly, without a moment's warning, a loud explosion occurred in the room above. The ceiling gave way in eleven different places, and Biggs, the Duke's butler, gardener, valet, chamberlain, and financial secretary, who had been harmlessly employed cleaning a bicycle in the attic, was precipitated at his Grace's feet amid a perfect shower of bricks and plaster.

"This model servant, who for three years had been second-footman to Lady Horatia Bulkinghorne

—a situation which he left without a character but with most of the silver spoons—was but momentarily disconcerted by his fall.

“ ‘Did your Grace ring?’ he inquired, with praiseworthy imperturbability.

“ ‘Gin and Perrier,’ replied the Duke, more from habit than thirst.

“ As the Duke spoke, a sudden disturbance at the front door attracted his attention. He pointed to the mat with a tremulous fore-finger, and the colour left the usually hectic face of the impassive Biggs, as he realised the dread import of this unnatural omen.

“ ‘They’ve come!’ at last managed to gasp the panic-stricken menial.

“ ‘At length!’ screamed the Duke, looking hurriedly round for a means of escape.

“ Readers, who have in so painstaking a manner followed the adventures of our hero through the preceding chapters, will have no difficulty in appreciating the cause of his Grace’s natural alarm, nor will they be at a loss to guess the nature of the Duke’s uncanny visitors.

“ Biggs hastened to the door and put his hand upon the key. Too late! There was a loud scream without, sounding all the more ghastly to the unfortunate wretches who knew the source whence it emanated.

“ The report of two revolver shots, fired in rapid

succession, was followed by an ominous silence. The door opened slowly."

(To be continued to-morrow.)

From this epoch-making story I am brought to earth with a dull thud by the sight of the *Society News*, in which I can find nothing of interest.

I confess at once that I did not expect to discover my own name mentioned in the Social Column. The day for that is past : I have long relinquished that honour to worthier souls. But I can still distinctly recall the thrill with which, many years ago—the exact number wild curates shall not drag from me—I hailed the first appearance of my name in print. It was included, I remember, in a vivid description of a Hyde Park Church Parade. Ah me, the park was a very different place in those days to what it is now. At that prehistoric period the Achilles statue gazed down upon a comparatively small and select gathering. There were no special trains running from the suburbs, whence passengers might hasten to the green penny chairs, to point out to one another the élite of Peckham and Bayswater as members of the notorious Smart Set of Mayfair. Things are no longer as they used to be. Indeed, they never were. In the back ages to which I allude there was still something of distinction attaching to a personal notice in the press. (All this, however, is by the way.)

The paragraph to which I particularly refer, after describing how Lady So-and-so was leaning against the park railings, talking to her brother ; how Sir John Thingummy was walking with his own wife ; how Lord What's-his-name was accompanied by a dog and two daughters, dressed alike—the daughters, of course, not the dog ; concluded with that mention of myself to which I can never look back without emotion. “Mr Reginald Drake Biffin” (so ran the mysterious report) “might have been observed hurrying Westward in a hansom !”

On that calm evening in June, when all was still and peaceful, when the principal thoroughfares were undergoing their customary repair—when, that is to say, the London season was at its height—I might have been observed hurrying Westward in a hansom ! That was all. I seem to have brought the paragraph to an abrupt conclusion. And surely so delicate and suggestive a pen-picture would gain nothing by elaboration. “Hurrying Westward !” Into the Unknown, so to speak. Urging the weary steed to further effort, with the point of my umbrella.

Ah, yes ! To each one of us it arrives at some period of his existence to taste the cup of fame. Each man has his sublime, his immemorial moment. This was mine. It has passed. I sink back into the comfortable obscurity of middle

age; but the memory of that one momentous incident is with me still, and shall be with me to the end.

Since that time I have frequently and diligently searched the columns of the Society papers for any mention of my name; and searched in vain. This one supreme act of mine in the hansom stands alone in the chronicles of our time. It may be that, as advancing years have brought a necessary renunciation of the more expensive methods of conveyance, it has become difficult for the conscientious lady-reporter to introduce the required element of romance into a description of my daily movements. "Crawling eastward in an omnibus!" There is no ring of sentiment in such a phrase. It suggests no dramatic possibilities. Henceforth, alas! I must be content to remain unparagraphed, be the social column never so empty. My "round of country visits" must remain unnoticed; the guests at my *recherché* dinners—including, though they may, the Servian Ambassador and the Crown Princess of Montenegro—must stand for ever unrecorded. My day is done; my life is over. I haven't the heart to add another word to this journal. The pen drops from my hand; there is a mist before my eyes. It is better to stop now, before August brings with it the presage of another Autumn, before actual senility sets in. . . .

.

(NOTE—The Diary breaks off abruptly here. It was in this month, as readers will no doubt remember, that the unfortunate incident occurred which led to Biffin's self-imposed, and I believe unnecessary, exile to Australia. I feel perfectly convinced myself that when my poor friend walked out of the Army and Navy Stores with a silver inkstand underneath his coat he had every intention of paying for that article. I have no doubt, too, that it was merely absence of mind, or at the worst a somewhat misguided sense of humour, that caused him to place the three silver match-boxes and the gold cigar-cutter from the Tobacco Department inside his umbrella. Biffin was the very soul of honour, but I realise only too clearly that his enemies have made capital out of the fact that he gave a false name and address, and that, when searched, he was found to be wearing next to his skin a large roll of linoleum (inscribed with the word WELCOME) which had mysteriously disappeared that very morning from the hall of the Hotel Metropole. I have known Biffin for years, and can vouch for his absolute respectability and personal integrity of character. I have no difficulty therefore in believing his simple explanation to the effect that, having come out without his cholera-belt, he was misled by the inscription to think that anybody was welcome to make use of

the mat. I am convinced that his intentions were not dishonourable, but merely hygienic. The Police Court proceedings were, however, extremely disagreeable. At one moment, indeed, I feared that my poor friend was going to be punished for what, after all, could only be termed an eccentricity of genius of which any literary man might easily be guilty. Fortunately the counsel engaged for the defence dwelt upon the fact that his client was closely related by marriage to the Dowager Lady Warlingham, as well as being a nephew of Sir George Blusterfield, K.C.B., and an intimate friend of the late Lord Bellinger. The magistrate was therefore able to deal with Biffin under the First Offenders' Act, as an honest kleptomaniac, and merely bound him over to come up for judgment if called upon. Biffin left the Court without a stain upon his character, and the constable who had found the cigar-cutter in his umbrella was reprimanded for excess of zeal. Owing, however, to certain uncalled for strictures to which my friend's conduct had given rise in the halfpenny press, it was thought advisable that he should retire temporarily from public view. But it was with tears of genuine emotion in their eyes that a select number of his friends, relations, and creditors saw him off at Southampton on board the s.s. *Sardonic*, upon whose passenger-list he figured as Mr Benjamin Tibshelf. Biffin (or Tibshelf,

as I suppose I ought to call him) is now making a name for himself in Western Australia, whither several of his ancestors had already preceded him more than half a century ago, and from the last accounts it seems likely that at no distant date he may be called upon to represent a section of our colonial kinsmen in the Parliament of the Commonwealth. Tibshelf (or Biffin, as I shall always think of him) left to me the entire management and control of his literary affairs in this country. I am indeed at this moment engaged in an acrimonious correspondence with his publisher who, like all publishers, is a man of principle—his principle being to get as much and give as little in return as possible—and declares that it would be ridiculous to dream of paying any royalties to one whom he incorrectly terms a “fugitive from justice.” This is, however, neither the time nor the place for me to expose the somewhat dubious methods of publishers, or to uphold the legal claims of my absent friend. It will be enough for me to be the humble means of bringing some of his lighter work to the public notice, and it is with perfect confidence that I entrust to the taste and judgment of my readers the literary reputation of my dear friend Benjamin Tibshelf, or, as I prefer to call him, Reginald Drake Biffin.

H. G.)

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